Toronto metro

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

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Your essential daily news | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

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VIMEO SCREENSHOT

'They took one of the most incredible people on the planet from us'

It was 9:30 at night, near Yonge and Carlton. Mark Ernsting, 39, was out for a routine walk. He was stabbed to death in a random attack. Now his friends and family are asking why.

metroNEWS

Road deaths near record

FATALITIES

Toronto hits 63 — one more would be most in a decade

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

If a single pedestrian, cyclist, driver or passenger dies on Toronto's streets between now and New Year's, 2015 will officially become the deadliest year on city roads in more than a decade.

It's left advocates fuming — and demanding to know why the city isn't doing more to protect vulnerable road users.

"It's a classic example of the city not planning," said Albert Koehl, a lawyer and crusader for safer streets. "We know we have more cyclists and pedestrians on the road but we haven't planned for their safety."

The latest fatal crash happened Tuesday morning at Jane Street and Lawrence Avenue W. An 80-year-old woman died after the car she was travelling in was hit in the intersection.

Her death brings the number of fatal collisions in Toronto to 63, matching the previous 10-year high set in 2013. With more than one person killed on local roads every week on average, it's likely the number will rise before the end of the year.

The majority — 37 — of those killed on our streets so far in 2015 have been pedestrians. Four were cyclists.

The city has made a number of choices favourable to drivers this year, Koehl said, including maintaining the eastern portion of the Gardiner Expressway and removing a pedestrian scramble at Bay and Bloor. Similar improvements for other road users haven't materialized, he said.

"Other cities, like New York, are saying deaths are not acceptable on their roads, but meanwhile Toronto is falling behind."

The provincial coroner and Toronto's chief medical health officer have recommended lowering speed limits as a way to prevent road deaths. Council approved a plan to reduce the limit to 30 km/h on residential streets in the core, but the money to make it happen has yet to be included in next year's budget.

> **"It's a great shame that the city isn't doing things that would save lives.**
> Albert Koehl

"We may not all be cyclists but we are certainly all pedestrians, so when we ignore these recommendations we do so at our own peril," Koehl said.

Mayor John Tory responded to the news Wednesday by promising to implement a new road-safety plan for Toronto.

"I don't want any pedestrians or cyclists killed in our city," he said.

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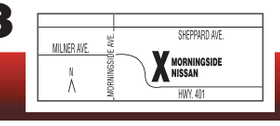

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

A single word almost killed the Paris climate deal, until a Canadian saved the day. **Canada**

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Kyle Lowry and co. may be leading the Raptors to new heights, but Toronto's basketball team couldn't hold a candle to Bautista's bat flip. Searches for the Blue Jays outpaced those for the Raptors three to one.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Go, go Google GO Train. Torontonians were four times more likely to search for GO transit than the Gardiner Expressway.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sorry, Abel. If Google ran the Grammys, then Drake would have 28 nominations to your seven.

Toronto's Googling revealed

TRENDS

Company's report shows what we like to look for online

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

You can tell a lot about a city by what it Googles.

Google Canada has released its annual report on the search habits of Canadians — including those typing their queries in Toronto.

The most searched-for term of the year was "Blue Jays," reflecting the nationwide appeal of our local baseball team. Although both teams made impressive playoff runs this year, Toronto searches for the Jays outpaced those for the Raptors by three to one.

The results also offer a glimpse into Torontonians' music tastes.

While Abel Tesfaye, a.k.a. The Weeknd, may be leading in Grammy nominations, the city's heart — and ears — still belong to Drake. According to Google, Torontonians were four times more likely to search for the Hotline Bling singer than The Weeknd.

The results will also do little to settle the city's ongoing east-west rivalry. Despite a growing number of hip stores and eateries opening their doors east of the Don Valley, searches for "Queen West" still outperformed those for "Queen East."

And, in perhaps the most Toronto search showdown ever, Google reported searches for the GO train outpaced those for the Gardiner Expressway by 400 per cent.

"We wanted to offer up a snapshot of Toronto through the lens of Google search — and for many people, the daily commute is a significant part of how they experience this city," said Google Canada spokesman Aaron Brindle.

"Transit is clearly a significant issue for Torontonians — and we see that reflected in our municipal politics, our online searches and, of course, our daily commutes."

NATIONWIDE

Canada's top 10 trending searches for 2015

1. Blue Jays
2. Justin Trudeau
3. Federal Election
4. Pan Am Games
5. Paris Shooting
6. Agario
7. Chris Hyndman
8. Charlie Hebdo
9. Lamar Odom
10. Caitlyn Jenner

Caitlyn Jenner
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MARK ERNSTING

Researcher killed in random street attack

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Friends of a man killed in a downtown stabbing want the world to know what's been lost.

Mark Ernsting, a biomedical engineer, was a researcher at the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research whose work held incredible promise, said Elaine Wilson, his friend of 20 years.

"The cure for cancer could have died yesterday," she said Wednesday afternoon.

Ernsting, 39, was out for a routine walk when he was attacked about 9:30 p.m. Tuesday on McGill Street, just east of Yonge.

Police arrested Calvin Michael Nimoh, 21, about an hour later at Yonge and Summerhill.

Nimoh has been charged with second-degree murder, and police said he didn't know the victim.

Ernsting's husband, Rob Iseman, and the many others he left behind don't know if the attack was random or a robbery gone bad.

But, they want to know why he was killed, Wilson said.

"We want whoever did this to know that they took one of the most incredible people on the planet from us," she said.

Ernsting wasn't only brilliant, she said.

He was kind and funny with a laugh that infected everyone he knew.

He was a green-thumbed gardener and a singer in the Church of the Redeemer's choir.

> **If I ever wanted to be in a relationship, I'd want it to be like Mark and Rob's.**
> Elaine Wilson

When someone needed a friend, Ernsting was always there — like the time Wilson sliced her hand open and he came running.

Ernsting's relationship with Iseman, who works for Metro, was a central part of his life.

"If I ever wanted to be in a relationship, I'd want it to be like Mark and Rob's," Wilson said.

"They loved each other so much every day, and they were always so happy together. They'd do everything together."

ABOVE: Mark Ernsting, right, with his husband Rob Iseman. FACEBOOK

RIGHT: Mark Ernsting was killed Tuesday while walking through a neighbourhood just east of Yonge Street. FACEBOOK

CRIME STATISTICS

City officials divided on recent violence

A rash of violent crimes across the city has led to two very different storylines from Toronto's public figures.

After a shooting Tuesday night left one man dead, Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti called the violence part of a turf war and suggested calling in the Canadian Forces to help police protect citizens.

But on Sunday, Police Chief Mark Saunders called last weekend's 48-hour string of violence a "blip." Torstar News Service took a look at historical crime statistics to provide some answers. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

STATS: TORONTO POLICE SERVICE

28

Shooting homicides
Ten years ago, Toronto experienced its most violent year in recent memory. During the "Year of the Gun," 52 people were shot and killed. Since then the number of shooting homicides has decreased to almost half.

16

Stabbing homicides
Despite the almost half a dozen stabbings that happened last week, the number of homicides by stabbing this year is comparable to recent history. The current count is the same as last year's total.

9

Other homicides
"Other" refers to a homicide that is neither a shooting nor stabbing. Three years ago, there were 15, in 2013 there were 19, and last year, 14.

125

Shooting injuries
The number of shooting injuries so far this year is almost double the 67 last year. But compared with the previous two years, it isn't unheard of.

242

Shooting occurrences
The number of shooting occurrences seems to have shot up this year. Last year, 170 were recorded, which was lower than the previous two years.

380

Shooting victims
The number of shooting victims also seems to have jumped this year. Last year, there were 223 shooting victims in Toronto.

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What else?

Officer bringing kids a new hope

OUTREACH

Star Wars passion used to connect with students

Colin McNeil
Metro | Toronto

Friday's opening of The Force Awakens is a much anticipated moment for many Star Wars fans. But for **Const. Peter De Quintal,** every day is a trek into a galaxy far, far away. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Const. Peter De Quintal walks a different beat than most Toronto police officers. His territory is galactic.

The school resource officer, better known as "Star Wars Cop" on Twitter and in real life, uses his lifelong love of Star Wars to break down barriers between kids and police. A toaster shaped like Darth Vader's helmet, Star Wars-themed aprons and lightsaber kitchen tongs are just a few of the tools in his arsenal.

De Quintal runs breakfast programs at two Toronto schools, where he uses these and other toys from a galaxy far, far away to reach students.

"The whole point of the Star Wars stuff is just to get the kids to interact with me, as a means of being an ice breaker," he said. "If I was just there cooking breakfast, I wouldn't necessarily get the reaction."

Once the students see past the uniform and badge, they open up.

"It definitely allows me to see the students who I don't think would necessarily speak to me, only because of the Star Wars connection," De Quintal said.

In between serving Star Wars-branded toast and making students comfortable, De Quintal combs the galaxy for office decorations of the Jedi variety. He's just moved to a new space at one of his schools and is eager to make it feel like home.

"I'm just trying to make it as Star Wars-themed as I can," he said.

Posters, toys and a Millennium Falcon suspended from the ceiling are just a few of his décor ideas.

But his identity as the Star Wars Cop has spread way beyond school hallways and Division 12 headquarters.

"I've had people I've never met send me gifts to our station," he says. "Last year, I got a Star Wars calendar, I got a Star Wars alarm clock with Yoda on it … little things like that."

Much of that is likely thanks to Twitter, where he has more than 1,000 followers, some of whom are no doubt there just for the Star Wars.

When he's not tweeting about bike safety and breakfast programs, he's posting photos of gingerbread cookies in the shape of tie fighters or showing off his latest Wookiee-themed throw pillow.

"If you don't care for Star Wars, I'm probably not the officer you want to follow," he said.

Follow Colin McNeil on Twitter @mcneilcolin

THE FORCE AWAKENS

Metro delves into the people, hype and love that make up Star Wars fandom.

Ben Varadi, Spin Master CEO CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO NEWS SERVICE

INTERVIEW

Awakening 'life' in robotic Jedi Master

Ben Varadi is vice-president and chief creative officer of Toronto-based Spin Master Ltd., one of Canada's largest children's entertainment and toy companies.

He oversaw the design and development of Legendary Yoda, a nearly two-foot-tall figure with voice recognition and motorized body movement that promises to be one of this year's most sought-after holiday toys.

Torstar News Service caught up with Varadi to learn about its design and how, in Yoda's words, "truly wonderful, the mind of a child is."

Q: I just want to point out you've created a toy that literally teaches kids the power of the Force.

Varadi: When I first sat down with the team, I told them there is only one goal: It has to be incredible. I think we delivered on the awesomeness.

There is no shortage of products stemming from the Star Wars franchise. So what makes Legendary Yoda different?

I think Yoda is the most fluid mechanical robot that's been developed in the toy world. The way he spins and moves with the lightsaber in his hand? It's a "wow" moment.

Bringing him to life in a way you can relate to and interact with him was always the biggest challenge. Because as cool as the movement is, what's more important is the relationship: that little moment when Yoda is real and no longer a toy made up of a battery source, microchip, plastic, rubber and programming.

You've turned the former Grand Master of the Jedi Council into a talking, voice-activated mechanized robot. How long did development take?

We did this in record time; all in one year.

Is it difficult to keep a balance between your adult and childhood instincts when designing a toy?

Just because making toys is something that involves children, there still needs to be a sensical flow.

So when developing a toy, I draw on industry history, cost and safety structures, all in a little framework called "wow" (the kid-like part).

So then, how important is it to still be a "kid at heart"?

Before a toy goes out the door, I always ask myself: Have I designed something I would have loved to play with as a child?

And you can feel that a little bit in Yoda, I hope.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

This interview has been condensed and edited.

Life sentence for Mississauga pastor

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Supporters call for help for man jailed in North Korea

Calls are mounting for North Korea to free a popular Mississauga pastor sentenced to life in prison Wednesday by the world's most secretive state.

From the GTA to Parliament Hill, news of the harsh sentence handed down to Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim, who heads one of Canada's largest churches, rattled congregants and politicians alike.

"We pray to God for his release," said Bernie Yun, who has known Lim for 30 years and has been a long-time member of his 3,000-strong congregation at the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Mississauga.

"Christmas is coming ... We hope the North Korean government will give us peace of mind by letting him go home to his wife and son, and his church family in Canada," Yun said.

North Korea's Supreme Court sentenced Lim to life, including hard labour, for what it called crimes against the state. Among the charges he faced were harming the dignity of the supreme leadership, trying to use religion to destroy the North Korean system, disseminating negative propaganda about the North to overseas Koreans, and helping U.S. and South Korean authorities lure and abduct North Korean citizens. State prosecutors had sought the death penalty.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed Canada's "tremendous concern."

"Issues about North Korea's governance and judicial system are well-known," Trudeau said. "We are very concerned about someone being sentenced to life in North Korea."

Trudeau said the government's immediate priority is to ensure Canadian diplomats get access to Lim. Apart from a brief glimpse at Lim's court appearance, that has not happened, he said.

Lim, who came to Canada from South Korea in 1986, is a clergyman who has led more than 100 humanitarian aid missions to North Korea since the mid-1990s, his friends and colleagues have told Toronto News Service.

Global Affairs Canada spokesperson François Lasalle said Canadian officials are dismayed at the "unduly harsh sentence."

"This is a serious violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and the right of states to have consular access to their citizens," Lasalle said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

This picture taken by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency Wednesday shows **Canadian pastor Hyeon Soo Lim,** right, at the North Korean Supreme Court in Pyongyang.
AFP PHOTO / KCNA VIA KNS

TRIAL

Alleged stabbing: woman in court

A woman charged with attempted murder for what police describe as an unprovoked stabbing made a brief appearance in court on Wednesday.

Rohinie Bisesar listened from the prisoner's box as a justice of the peace set her next court date on Friday.

Outside the court, defence lawyer Calvin Barry said he intends to seek bail for Bisesar, and that she has been co-operating with police since her arrest.

Bisesar, 40, was arrested Tuesday afternoon in connection with the mid-afternoon knife attack in a downtown drug store last week.

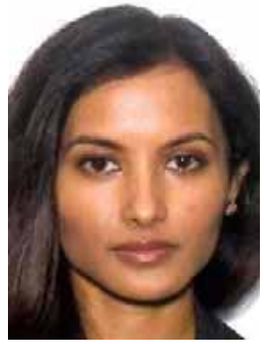
Police were called to the Shoppers Drug Mart at 66 Wellington St. W. at 2:55 p.m. Friday after reports of a stabbing.

They said a woman armed with a knife approached the victim inside the store, then stabbed her without provocation.

The victim did not know the assailant, police said, and the stabbing appeared to have been a "completely random act of violence."

The victim remained in "grave" condition in hospital on Monday, according to police.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Rohinie Bisesar TORONTO POLICE

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Wintry winners: cool creations

PUBLIC ART

Organizers hope to raise $18K to expand installations

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Winter is coming. And so is a raft of new public art to Toronto's Beach neighbourhood.

The winners have been chosen in the second annual Winter Stations contest, which converts lifeguard stations along Toronto's eastern waterfront into temporary art installations.

The contest received 378 submissions from artists in 49 countries, said Winter Stations co-founder Justin Ridgeway. The winners, and their designs, will be announced in January.

Last year's inaugural event was an enormous success, garnering international press coverage, Ridgeway said. This year, organizers are looking to make an even bigger splash on the frozen shores of Lake Ontario.

"We've really increased the scale," he said. "Last year we had five installations. This year we have a minimum of eight, and we're hoping to expand that to 10."

To help grow the event, Ridgeway and his colleagues have started an IndieGoGo crowd-funding campaign. They're hoping to raise $18,000, which will help them build more — and better — art installations.

378

The contest received a total of **378 entries** from 49 countries.

By turning the Beach into a temporary art gallery, Ridgeway said Winter Stations helps people get out of the house and avoid "hibernating." It also "activates and animates" a portion of the city that's not very well used during the winter.

The international nature of the competition also helps put Toronto on the map as a "design-forward city," Ridgeway said.

"The hope is that an artist that comes here from the U.K., for example, gets to see our city and becomes an ambassador for Toronto," he said.

After the winners are announced, they'll be brought to Toronto over the Family Day long weekend in February to build and install their work. The exhibition will open officially on Feb. 15 and the artworks will remain up for six weeks.

In addition to installations at Kew, Balmy and Woodbine beaches, Winter Station works will also be on display at local universities, including Ryerson, OCAD, Laurentian and the University of Toronto.

Snowcone, left, one of the winning entries from last year's Winter Stations art contest, is seen along the waterfront. **Iceover**, right, is one of the designs submitted for this year's Winter Stations contest. The artwork is designed to change its appearance as the temperature fluctuates above and below the freezing point. COURTESY OF EAMON MACMAHON; CONTRIBUTED

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Investing in Instagram

Entrepreneurs around the world are harnessing Instagram to do more than share their favourite pics: They're promoting their art, products and personal brands. Meet five Toronto millennials who credit Instagram with a real business boost. **Liz Beddall/Metro**

Jesse Herzog, 26, @jesseherzog

Photographer, 44,700 followers
Recently landed a shoot for a Universal Music artist and is regularly sought out by with brands and models looking to collaborate over Instagram.

"Gaining followers doesn't happen overnight. You need to be constantly producing new, quality material while developing a personal style. During the summer I was working a 9-5, shooting after work and then editing all night long."

Jesse recommends: @natasha.wiseman, @roof_topper

Shaquel Munroe, 22, @shaqvel

28,400 followers
Recently landed a gig with Nike Crown League though an Instagram connection

"You've got to follow your own eye. If you copy, the community won't really want to gravitate towards you. Why follow you when they can follow the originator?"

Shaquel recommends:
@jayscale
@appalledq

Jake Mossop, 30, @thejakemossop

Registered nurse/
health and fitness personality
9,310 followers
Scouted by IN Magazine to be a brand ambassador for Nike

"The important thing is knowing your audience. My following falls within the LGBT community.... You've got to get to know what your followers like to see."

Jake recommends:
@triplevfitness
@meghanyuriyoung

Brittany Gray, 30, @fancyfaceinc

Owner, creative director of Fancy Face Inc., 8,643 followers
Gets half of bookings through Instagram, including with major celebs and fashion houses

"Websites are great but they can be a bit presentational, but this can be more personal. The main thing is to be very selective.... You have to really think of the overall aesthetic."

Brittany recommends:
@wedlocks, @rachelaclingen

Lexi Haslam, 29, @lexingtonandco

Event planner/stylist,
3,050 followers
Has booked weddings directly through Instagram

"Clients can get insight into who we are as entrepreneurs.... Because Instagram can also portray a world and life you don't necessarily live, I think it's helpful that I've kept mine very much who I am."

Lexi recommends: @kaylarocca, @blushandbloom

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TORONTO

Live green Toronto

Isis Rebanks has been ISIL-ated by a major confectioner.
ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Nutella says nuts to Isis

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Jar featuring personalized label denied to six-year-old

Six-year-old Isis Rebanks is not a terrorist, but according to Nutella she isn't fit for another label, either.

Last week, Ella Rebanks, Isis's mother, was walking through Holt Renfrew when she saw a stand offering personalized Nutella labels.

For $12.99, customers could have a name custom-printed on a jar of the popular hazelnut spread in the brand's iconic black-and-red block lettering.

"I saw the stand and thought immediately, 'Oh my gosh, that's perfect, they'll love that,'" said Rebanks.

She wrote down the names of her three children: Zuleika, Oliver and Isis. Expecting to receive a sweet surprise for her children, she was sickened by what she says happened next.

"The staff went into a huddled conversation, and then one woman emerged and said, 'I'm sorry, we can't print that name,'" said Rebanks. "She just pointed at the name. She couldn't even say it."

This wasn't the first time Isis, a name with ancient roots, has caused problems for the Rebanks family.

"Sometimes when I'm in the park and I have to yell 'Isis'… people look twice," said Rebanks.

Last year, she said, another girl in senior kindergarten told Isis she was "named after a bad bomb" and told other girls they shouldn't be friends with her because Isis and her family kill people.

The past few months have been tough on girls named Isis around the world. Just last month a five-year-old named Isis living in Australia had her name blocked by Nutella after the computer program that prints the labels flagged her name as a word it couldn't print.

In another incident, nine-year-old Isis Fernandes, from Winnipeg, received an apology from a member of the Canadian Forces who had refused to print her name on a certificate after she completed an obstacle course.

Rebanks said Isis often hears her name on the radio, prompting her to ask why people were talking about her.

"We explain that there are a bunch of evil men far away who have taken the letters of your name, and they're the bad ISIS; you're the good Isis," said Rebanks.

Rebanks said it will be a long time before the chocolate treat appears in her house again.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> **Sometimes when I'm in the park and I have to yell 'Isis,' people look twice.**
> Ella Rebanks

HEALTH

Vaping ban delayed

Ontario's Liberal government is delaying plans to ban vaping and the use of electronic cigarettes in public places.

The ban on e-cigarettes in public spaces and workplaces was supposed to go into effect Jan. 1, but Associate Health Minister Dipika Damerla says it will be delayed until later in the year.

She says the ban on selling e-cigarettes to minors under the age of 19 will go into force Jan. 1, but not the regulation limiting where adults can and cannot use them.

The government promised to review regulations around where marijuana can and cannot be vaped in November, just one day after an exemption for medical marijuana users to the vaporizing law came to light.

Damerla says the government wants to bring in all the regulations around vaping at the same time. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Cyclist injured in crash

A cyclist in his late 60s is in life-threatening condition after being struck by a vehicle near Leslie Street and Bannatyne Drive at about 12:20 p.m. Wednesday. Police say the driver remained on the scene and is co-operating with the investigation.

Leslie south of Highway 401 was reopened to traffic just after 4 p.m.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Thief takes car with kids

Toronto police are investigating the theft of a car with two children inside.

Police said a man jumped into a silver Acura, left running near Parliament and Dundas streets around 7 p.m. Wednesday.

It was found abandoned 15 minutes later, with a six-year-old and a 14-month-old inside. Both children "are OK and with their mother," police said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Spat over 'flawed' math

SCARBOROUGH SUBWAY

Matlow and Keesmaat exchange testy messages

As the public debate over the Scarborough subway continues, behind the scenes, the city's chief planner and the most vocal opponent of the project on city council have been sparring over "flawed" numbers.

The war of words between Ward 22 (St. Paul's) Coun. Josh Matlow and chief planner Jennifer Keesmaat escalated last month during a back-and-forth obtained by Torstar News Service.

Their letters highlight continuing criticism over the justification for a three-stop, $3.56-billion subway. But they also draw attention to concerns over the part senior staff played in seeing a seven-stop, fully funded, $1.48-billion LRT cancelled.

Matlow first sent a public letter to Keesmaat on Sept. 18 about the numbers that influenced council's 2013 subway decision, which followed on a memo sent by Keesmaat to all councillors about upcoming public consultations.

His concerns were focused on ridership figures first provided by city staff in July 2013, at a crucial meeting in which council abruptly switched direction from the already approved LRT — at the urging of former mayor Rob Ford — to a subway that will cost $2 billion more.

The TTC had projected the ridership of a Scarborough subway at just 9,500 passengers travelling in the busiest direction during rush hour — using a standard measurement in transit planning. City staff put forward a significantly higher figure of 14,000 riders. Councillors used that number to justify building the higher-capacity subway.

In his letter, Matlow pointed to an interview in July, in which Keesmaat admitted that the "rushed" analysis that produced that 14,000 ridership figure was "problematic." He asked that Keesmaat's planning division show their work on how that number was reached.

In Keesmaat's Oct. 9 reply, the chief planner outlines that staff are working on a new, more "robust" model.

More than a month later, on Nov. 19, Matlow emailed Keesmaat directly. The 14,000 number, he said, "doesn't stand up to any reasonable scrutiny."

In her letter, Keesmaat attached a list of assumptions used to calculate the 14,000 number, which have been previously published.

Matlow pointed out that a July 2013 staff report included the downtown relief line subway in a list of transit projects that were assumed to be in place by 2031 — and that was one of the drivers in the increased ridership projection. The list forwarded by Keesmaat in October leaves that still-hypothetical subway line out of the equation.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Coun. Josh Matlow.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Chief planner Jennifer Keesmaat.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE/ PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: METRO

INFRASTRUCTURE

Highway going nowhere

The province has put the brakes on its plans for a new 400-series highway in Greater Toronto.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Transportation said it "suspended" its work on the GTA West Highway Corridor, the proposed highway of up to six lanes that would connect Vaughan to Milton. The ministry said it will review the project over the next few months.

The province was deep into Stage 2 of the project, which included detailed environmental assessments of a number of proposed routes and numerous public meetings. The ministry said its goal was to identify a preferred route by the end of this year that would link Highway 400 in York Region to Highway 401/407 ETR in Halton and include a dedicated transitway.

Instead, a ministry spokesman said an update on the future of the project will be provided next spring — and all further public meetings have been cancelled.

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Festival season comes early

MUSIC

Summer shows off-load reams of tickets, stay in fans' minds

It seems odd to start talking about summer music-festival season when Toronto hasn't even had a proper snowfall yet, but two of the largest players in a crowded field have already sold out tiers of tickets before announcing a single artist in their lineups.

For the first time in its history, Boots and Hearts — the soon-to-be five-year-old country campout at Burl's Creek — put a first round of weekend general-admission passes on sale in September at $229.99 without naming any of the performers coming to southern Ontario next Aug. 4 to 7. No one seemed to mind.

"We were shocked. We sold out the first tier in, like, 15 minutes," says Laura Kennedy of Republic Live, the concert-promotion outfit responsible for Boots and Hearts and recent rock 'n' roll upstart WayHome.

Fans enjoy a performance at the 2015 Boots and Hearts Music Festival. Tim McGraw and Dierks Bentley will headline the 2016 event, taking place Aug. 4-7. CNW GROUP/REPUBLIC LIVE

Apparently, it doesn't hurt to get a jump on the competition with the insanely crowded Summer of the Festival behind us: think WayHome, OVO, Bestival, Riot Fest, T.U.R.F. and on and on and on.

Boots and Hearts has since announced some of its high-powered talent roster, which will include Tim McGraw, Blake Shelton and Dierks Bentley, and watched its second-tier $249.99 general-admission tickets nearly sell out, too. The price will shortly go up to the third and last general-admission tier of $269.99. Another 70,000-strong sellout already seems inevitable, and 2016 is still a couple of weeks away — let alone August.

Boots and Hearts has built its success, in part, on being what Kennedy calls a "365-day brand," by consistently maintaining enough visibility to keep its core fan base excited about coming back. It's a smart tactic, and one more and more festivals — including WayHome, which is reaching out to last summer's "#wayhomies" through social media — are embracing.

> **We sold out the first tier in, like, 15 minutes.**
> Laura Kennedy

Field Trip, which has also curated a "Discovery Series" of club shows during the colder months in the past, understands the value of staying in people's faces year-round. On Nov. 26, for the second time, the throwdown at Fort York offered diehard Field Trippers a first crack at weekend "Explorer" passes for $100 without revealing any of the 2016 lineup. They were all snapped up almost instantly.

"We definitely recognize the market is competitive and there are a lot of choices for the interested festival-goer, so we try to get out there in front of the new year and keep the festival in people's minds," says Aaron Miller of Arts & Crafts, the local label that throws the event.

Of course, with so many young festivals entering the Toronto market in recent years, there's still not a great deal of profit being made. Sometimes, as Toronto Urban Roots Festival founder Jeff Cohen notes, it's wise to keep the cash flow trickling all year long.

"The reality is most emerging young local music festivals all have operating losses," he says. "These pre-sales are a great way to offer fans discounts for buying in early but, marketing spin aside, in my opinion its main purpose from a business standpoint is to either help pay for last year's losses or help finance this year's operating budget, in the case where advance deposits are required."

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A resident clears snow off the frozen surface of **Toogood Pond in Unionville.** VINCE TALOTTA/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MARKHAM

Council agrees to save pond skating

The skating on Toogood Pond can go on.

Markham council passed a motion Tuesday night that will allow the community to continue the beloved tradition of skating on the pond in Unionville.

Councillors heard from a number of residents, including local teens, about why the city should get rid of a proposed skating ban, said Unionville resident Shanta Sundarason, who brought the young delegation to the civic centre.

She said they spoke about "tradition" and the "freedom" that comes with pond skating, which cannot be replicated by rinks.

Markham council endorsed a motion that allows people to continue skating on the pond at their own risk and will not require the city to maintain or monitor the ice. It also looks to initiate discussions with other cities where pond skating is allowed to possibly jointly hire an ice engineer. The city also proposed establishing a working group within the community to look at and implement safety measures.

Toronto recently legalized pond skating at Grenadier Pond in High Park, and nearby Richmond Hill allows skating during the winter on Mill Pond.

Sundarason said she was "thrilled" by the outcome.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

HOLIDAYS

Swap ugly sweaters, socks for Skittles

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

If your aunt gives you Sublime CDs because you loved the band as a teen, or your grandpa gifts an ugly sweater only he would wear, you've earned the right to taste the rainbow.

The folks at Wrigley are setting up a Skittles pawn shop at 242 Queen St. W., starting on Boxing Day and running through Dec. 30. People can bring in all their unwanted holiday gifts, have them evaluated by a pawnbroker and, then, trade them in for Skittles.

"Many complicated, scientific factors go into assessing the value of your item in Skittles," the website says, noting that haggling is welcome.

Certain items won't be accepted, including drugs, weapons, garbage and "inappropriate images." Trade-ins will be donated to the Goodwill ReUse Centre in Scarborough.

You can also get an item appraised at skittlespawn.com.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed questions from journalists and the public at the National Arts Centre on Wednesday. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

PM opens up at town hall

Q & A

Justin Trudeau gives views on CF-18s, Trump and photo ops

Michael Woods
Metro | Ottawa

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took questions from journalists and the public at an hour-long town hall hosted by Maclean's Magazine at the National Arts Centre Wednesday. Here are three notable moments from his Q & A.

1 **CF-18s:** Trudeau said U.S. President Barack Obama hasn't asked him to reconsider his pledge to withdraw Canada's CF-18 fighter jets from the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"I've made it very clear that our commitment was to withdraw the CF-18s," Trudeau said. "He didn't ask me to keep those in, nor would I have kept them in if he had asked me."

2 **Donald Trump:** Asked about Donald Trump's politics, Trudeau shied away from commenting directly on U.S. politics. But without mentioning Trump's name, he slammed "the politics of intolerance and hateful rhetoric."

"If we allow politicians to succeed by scaring people, we don't actually end up any safer. Fear doesn't make us safer, it makes us weaker," Trudeau said. "We need to remain focused on keeping our communities safe and keeping our communities united instead of trying to build walls and scapegoat communities.

"Painting (ISIL) and others with a broad brush that extends to all Muslims is not just ignorant, it is irresponsible."

3 **Charm Offensive:** Trudeau was asked about his charm offensive since taking office, such as posing in Vogue Magazine.

"It's not about image. It's about substance," he said. "That's what so many of my political opponents haven't understood." He said serving Canadians well means listening to them and engaging in "real conversations." It also means talking to a broad range of publications.

COURT

Mike Duffy trial persists
After six days of sharing career reminiscences and grievances about life in the Conservative fold, Sen. Mike Duffy on Wednesday faced the Crown's scrutiny of his version of events and of the particulars of where he actually lives.

The Crown is scheduled to continue its cross-examination on Thursday. Lawyers discussed with the judge the need for more time to wrap up the trial. THE CANADIAN PRESS

FORCE AWAKENS

Kids 'sworn to secrecy' on Star Wars plot

It's not exactly the Official Secrets Act, but it's close.

Eleven kids from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa had to swear not to disclose the plot of the upcoming Star Wars: The Force Awakens until it comes out in theatres.

For that, they got to attend a private preview on Tuesday night with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"Last night they were treated like royalty," Isabelle Mailloux of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Foundation said in an interview.

"He made them feel special," Mailloux said. "Each one was a special guest. It was adorable."

The children ranged from eight to 18 and have a variety of ailments. Some are being treated for cancer. One has lost a leg. Another is on dialysis.

"They were sworn to secrecy about the plot of the movie until it comes out," Mailloux said. "They loved that, too." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Trudeau tweeted out this photo from his account during a private screening of the new film. TWITTER

IMMIGRATION

Integration key to student success

A sweeping new study of immigrant students around the world shows they do best in countries that bring them into regular classrooms as quickly as possible, where teachers feel comfortable working with children of different backgrounds and where extra help is offered to immigrant families — all hallmarks of GTA schools.

The 124-page report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to be released Thursday, looks at how immigrant students in some 30 countries, including Canada, performed on a standardized test in the "3 Rs" in 2012, and concludes their success depends largely on how the host country helps them integrate in school.

"Immigrant students perform better and report feeling more accepted in some countries than others, which suggests education policy has an impact on integration," said the report, Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration.

It suggests the countries that best help immigrant students succeed move them into regular classrooms while giving them a crash course in their new language, rather than segregate them until they have mastered the language, as happens in some countries.

In Ontario, schools must place newcomers in a regular classroom for at least part of each day, noted Paula Markus, the Toronto District School Board's coordinator of English as a Second Language (ESL).

"We don't want to segregate children, even from the first days, because while we're giving them English language support we know it's important for them to get to know English-speaking peers and make friends and that helps their adjustment," she said.

Nor should teachers in the diverse GTA be intimidated by the wave of refugees Canada is expecting, she said, "because we have the most amazing, diverse classrooms in the world here. As Justin Trudeau said, this is 2015."

In preparation for the influx of Syrian refugee students, Markus has lined up Syrian speakers and even a documentary from Toronto's recent Syria Film Festival to help inform teachers at a conference this spring.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

REPORT

The OECD report cites the importance of early learning and preschool programs, which Grewal noted is not always a familiar concept in some communities. She said parent drop-in centres like those common in Peel and Toronto may be more comfortable because they don't involve parents leaving their child, which can be traumatic for a refugee family.

Students Ahmad Joujou, 15, and Ferhad Hebbo, 14, pose with teacher Noha Khalifa, at Victoria Park Secondary School, on Nov. 12. GTA schools are well prepared to handle an influx of Syrian refugees. ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Trudeau meets with indigenous leaders

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau confesses he can't compel an apology from the Pope for the role of the Catholic Church in Canada's residential school system. But Trudeau says he looks forward to raising the matter with the pontiff. Trudeau met with leaders from five indigenous organizations Wednesday on the legacy of residential schools. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Conrad Black endorses Trump in National Review

Donald Trump hasn't received too many ringing endorsements from famous conservative elites — but he's just received praise from one Canadians know well. Conrad Black has penned a piece titled, "Trump Is The Good Guy" for the National Review. It apparently delighted his old pal, who's leading national polls for the Republican nomination. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Clockwise from left: French Foreign Minister and COP21 President Laurent Fabius with United Nations General Secretary of the Climate Convention Christiana Figueres, COP21 General Secretary Pierre-Henri Guignard and UN Deputy Executive Secretary of the Climate Change Secretariat Richard Kinley, during the COP21 United Nations Conference on climate change, on Dec. 2.

ERIC FEFERBERG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Single word almost kills climate deal

'SHALL'

Canadian apologizes for error in document

A single one-syllable, five-letter word almost scuttled the Paris climate deal, and it was a Canadian who had to literally sit in front of the world and sort it out at the 11th hour.

Not to mention apologize for an error the United States would never accept if allowed to stand.

The apology came from Winnipeg-born Richard Kinley. Previously an official with the Canadian government, Kinley is second-in-command to Christiana Figueres, executive secretary to the United Nations-led Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This means Kinley manages the UN's climate shop, including the behind-the-scenes machinery that led to the final Paris text — version L9 — which carried the following contentious line: "Developed country parties shall continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets."

The problem word is "shall." In international law that seemingly benign word creates a legally binding commitment. But, such obligations require Senate approval in the U.S. — at least as they relate to emissions targets. If the "shall" were allowed to stay, there would be no chance U.S. President Barack Obama could secure domestic support for the agreement.

Republicans in the Senate would vote it down, and the Paris climate change deal would fall apart.

When U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry first saw the sentence he was taken aback, telling a reporter: "We cannot do this and we will not do this."

There were two options: reopen the text for further revision, which risked having other countries step forward with other demands, or admit the mistake — in front of delegates from 196 countries.

The latter option was chosen, and it was Kinley who had to break the news that the word "shall" in Article 4, Paragraph 4 was the wrong word. It needed to be changed to "should."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Richard Kinley
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MANITOBA

Mennonite man jailed for assaulting kids

A man from an old-order Mennonite community in Manitoba has been sentenced to one year in jail after court heard children were beaten with leather straps and cattle prods to "save" them from the "sin of lust."

The 59-year-old man was an elder in the community and was sentenced earlier this week for assault and assault with a weapon involving seven children.

Court was told the accused was one of four key leaders in the community who used tools to dole out discipline.

Children were denied food and sleep, slapped, in some cases hit with whips or wood, and given electric shocks with a cattle prod, court documents said.

"This case is about domination and abuse. Zealous adults conceived that 'strong punishment' was necessary to save children from the sin of lust."
Crown attorney James Ross

"It was an obsessive campaign to remove an imagined evil," Crown attorney James Ross wrote as part of a one-year sentencing recommendation that was agreed to by the defence.

Court heard that some community leaders falsely believed that children had become sexually active and would punish the children repeatedly.

The identities of the children are protected under a publication ban and The Canadian Press is not naming any of the accused or the small community where they live.

Another member of the community was sentenced earlier this month to six months in jail. The cases of two other men are still before the courts.

The abuse occurred between 2011 and 2013. When police and child welfare workers moved into the isolated community, they seized 42 children and more than a dozen adults were charged.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

New Bedford Whaling Museum senior maritime historian Michael Dyer with several whaling vessel log books
STEPHAN SAVOIA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Logs reveal Earth's past

ENVIRONMENT

Whaling ship records speak to climate

Maritime historians, climate scientists and ordinary citizens are coming together on a project to study the logbooks of 19th-century whaling ships to better understand modern-day climate change and Arctic weather patterns.

Whaling ships kept meticulous daily logbooks of weather conditions during their often yearslong voyages searching the globe for whales, valued for their light-giving oil, said Michael Dyer, senior maritime historian at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in Massachusetts, which is supplying much of the data.

Some logs include information about life on board, such as sailors falling overboard, or being disciplined for stealing or other transgressions, and of course, notations whenever whales are spotted. More important for this project, they include precise longitude and latitude measurements, weather conditions, the presence of icebergs and the edge of the ice shelf.

"If they're cruising in the Bering Strait and there's ice, there will be a notation in the logbook that ice fields are present," Dyer said.

The project, called Old Weather: Whaling, is led by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The whaling museum is transcribing and digitizing its own logbooks, as well as original data sources from the Nantucket Historical Association, Martha's Vineyard Museum, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and the New Bedford Free Public Library.

The digitized logbooks are being posted online so ordinary "citizen-scientists" can help researchers sift through the vast amounts of information.

The museum has about 2,600 whaling logbooks dating from 1756 to 1965, but the project so far includes just about 300 logbooks related to whaling trips to the Arctic from the mid-1800s to the first decade of the 20th century.

On a most basic level, the information from an old whaling logbook can be compared to current conditions; for example, is there sea ice today in the places where whalers saw sea ice 150 years ago?

But the project is much more than that, said Kevin Wood, a climate scientist with NOAA's Joint Institute for the Study of the Ocean and Atmosphere at the University of Washington and a lead researcher on the project. By recovering as much weather data as possible, the information could help create sophisticated computer models of past climate and help predict future conditions.

He called it a "virtual time-travelling weather satellite."
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAPAN

Wives, husbands must share surname

Japan's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that requiring married couples to have the same surname is constitutional, dealing a blow to a longtime effort for gender equality in choosing names.

The law does not say which partner must give up his or her name in marriage. In practice it has almost always been the woman who took the husband's name. Some women say that is unfair and feel as though their identity is lost.

In traditional marriage, one person, usually the woman, enters the household of the partner and is registered as a member of that household. Men are seen as more powerful in Japanese traditional culture. But as women increasingly have careers, some argue that changing surnames is confusing.

Some Japanese women continue to use their maiden name professionally, even after their surnames are legally changed following marriage. Some couples simply don't register their marriages.

> **This is about women's human rights.**
> Akemi Ujitani

Kaori Okuni, one of the plaintiffs, said she was deeply disappointed.

"This has consequences for the future, meaning suffering for those who plan to marry," she told a news conference.

Akemi Ujitani, among a group of people gathered outside the Supreme Court building, broke into tears.

"This is about women's human rights," she said.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Russian Orthodox Church puts the "cat" in Catholic with new calendar

A group of Christian enthusiasts has released a calendar showing an unexpected face of the Russian Orthodox Church: cat-loving priests.

The Priest and Cat calendar released earlier this month by photographer Anna Galperina and editor Ksenia Luchenko shows 12 Orthodox priests at their homes posing with their cats.

Luchenko said the idea was totally spontaneous but it can now be viewed as a Russian Orthodox answer to the annual Italian Calendario Romano, featuring handsome young priests of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Gatti di Roma calendar filled with Rome's cats.

Luchenko said some of priests refused to be photographed, fearing that the project would be too "pop."

"To be honest, it feels a bit strange, when you call priests and ask: 'Father, tell me please, do you have a cat? Oh, you do? Great!" she said. "So the initial reaction was a bit wary."

Father Pyotr Dynnikov who posed as Mr. February said he liked the idea because the calendar lends the church a lighter and less official dimension.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A small sampling of 12 months of monks and their cats:

1 **Russian monk Grigory (Pobozhin)** with his cat Koshka

2 **Russian monk Feodorit (Senchukov)** with Monya

3 **Russian clergyman Sergei Kruglov** with his cat Shurik

ALL IMAGES ANNA GALPERINA/ARTOS/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Refugees mistreated in Turkey: Rights group

Amnesty International says Turkey has rounded up refugees and asylum-seekers since September and transported them to detention centres where some were mistreated or forcibly returned to Syria and Iraq. Amnesty said the EU risks being "complicit in serious human rights violations." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cosby lawsuit moved to federal court

A lawsuit against Bill Cosby is being moved to federal court. His accuser, Renita Hill, 48, sued in October claiming Cosby drugged and had sex with her several times after they met on a children's educational TV show in 1983. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Qataris abducted in Iraq

In a remote desert area in southern Iraq, unidentified gunmen driving in SUVs raided a camp for falconry hunters on Wednesday, abducting up to 26 Qataris, Iraqi officials said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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UNITED STATES

Mistrial in first Freddie Gray case

The first effort to find a police officer criminally responsible for Freddie Gray's death from a broken neck in a police van ended Wednesday with a hung jury and a mistrial in Baltimore, Md.

Six officers have been charged in Gray's death. William Porter has been accused of failing to get medical help for a wounded Gray and has been charged with assault, manslaughter, misconduct in office and reckless endangerment.

It was not immediately clear whether he will face a retrial.

Circuit Judge Barry Williams planned to discuss a possible retrial with both sides in his chambers on Thursday.

Gray, 25, who had been suspected of possessing an illegal switchblade, was arrested while fleeing from officers and died April 19, a week after his neck was broken inside a police van. He had been left handcuffed, shackled and face-down on the van's floor. An autopsy concluded he probably couldn't brace himself whenever the van turned a corner or braked suddenly.

> **We cannot be defined by the unrest of the spring**
> Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake

Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake and the new police commissioner she installed after the riots following Gray's death warned people against more violence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANCE

Charlie Hebdo gifts $4M to victims

Charlie Hebdo, the satirical newspaper in Paris whose staff had been decimated by Islamic extremist gunmen and then beset by internal tensions over an unexpected influx of donations and readers, said Wednesday it will turn over all the money to victims of the three days of attacks in January.

84
The number of countries from which Charlie Hebdo received donations. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

A pair of French-born brothers killed 12 people during an editorial meeting on Jan. 7. The publication had been targeted for its caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

The three days of attacks, co-ordinated with a third man targeting a kosher supermarket and policewoman, left a total of 17 dead before the gunmen were shot to death in police raids.

Suddenly flush with cash from donations and a global readership, the weekly saw tension among surviving staff, in large part over the money.

In a statement Wednesday, Charlie Hebdo said it would turn over nearly $4.4 million US, and that the French government had appointed an oversight committee to determine how the money would be redistributed in coming weeks.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Waves crash during a November gale at Lake Superior's Government Beach in Ontario. A new study suggests lakes on average are warming faster than the climate as a whole. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Freshwater lakes are heating up fast

CLIMATE

Lake Superior second-fastest warming lake in world: study

Our rapidly warming world has another high-profile victim — lakes.

An alarming new study says freshwater lakes are warming at more than twice the pace of oceans, and Lake Superior is the second-fastest warming lake in the world, behind Sweden's Lake Fracksjon.

The rest of the Great Lakes are also faring dismally, the study says, putting native fish in jeopardy, increasing the risk of invasive species and raising fears of widespread algae blooms.

The study, by a team of international scientists, analyzed data from hundreds of lakes around the world. It found that summer surface temperatures rose by about 0.34 C on average between 1985 and 2009.

That may not sound like a lot, acknowledged Sapna Sharma, the lead author of the study and an assistant professor in the faculty of science at York University. But put that in context with air temperatures and ocean temperature increase and "you see there is a big difference," she said.

Average air temperatures over the same period have warmed about 0.24 C, while oceans have warmed about 0.11 C, she said.

Lakes that are covered with ice in winter, like most Canadian lakes, are warming twice as fast because the lakes are increasingly ice-free earlier and for longer periods.

"By the time you get to summer, there is a longer period of open ice and more time for lakes to warm faster," Sharma said.

The Great Lakes are also facing an increase in solar radiation, another factor for the rapid warming of freshwater lakes.

The study, published Wednesday in Geophysical Research Letters, examined data from 236 lakes. Some readings came from NASA satellites; others came from data collected on the ground. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

0.34
Average degrees in Celsius by which summer surface lake temperatures have risen between 1985-2009.

0.24
Average degrees in Celsius by which air temperatures have risen in the same time period.

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COMPUTER LITERACY **PUSH TO CREATE TECHIE TYKES**
Third-grader Jaysean Erby solves a coding problem as Apple CEO Tim Cook watches from behind during a coding workshop at an Apple Store in New York last week. There's a push across the U.S. to improve computer literacy in elementary school, and entrepreneurs are jumping aboard. But some critics warn that pushing advanced concepts on younger kids could frustrate them and turn them off computer science completely. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

FINANCIAL FUTURE

Parents put off retirement to help kids

Half of Canadian parents say they would postpone retirement because of concerns about the financial future of their children.

Parents with children aged 18 to 24 said they were willing to trade some of their own financial security to help out their kids in a changing economy, BMO Wealth Management said in a report.

Half said they would be willing to retire later than planned, one-third said they would save less for retirement, and 22 per cent said they would take on debt.

Roughly the same proportion who said they would retire later than planned said they received little or no support from their parents when they were young adults themselves.

22%
The percentage of parents who said they would take on debt to help their kids in a changing economy.

The biggest financial concern for parents about their children was financial problems caused by debt, followed by difficulties achieving financial independence and insufficient employment.

The so-called millennial generation of those born after 1980 faces different economic realities than their parents, especially after the 2008 financial crisis.

The number of contract workers has grown more than four times faster than the number of full-time employees since 2008, according to Statistics Canada. The number of Canadians aged 25 to 44 in full-time employment is up 1.2 per cent since 2008, compared with a 24.9 per cent rise in contract work.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada, U.S. to part ways

INTEREST RATE

BoC won't match Federal Reserve hike, expert predicts

The U.S. Federal Reserve raised its interest rate Wednesday, exerting downward pressure on the loonie that has been steadily dropping in recent months as global oil prices plunged.

The American central bank lifted its key rate by a quarter-point to a range of 0.25 per cent to 0.5 per cent, ending a seven-year period of near-zero borrowing rates.

Scott Guitard, a portfolio manager at Fiduciary Trust Canada, said climbing American interest rates will likely mean the opposite for the Canadian dollar.

He also predicts Canada's central bank will stick with its decision to hold steady on its key lending rate even if the loonie falls further because of enduring low oil prices.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, speaking ahead of the announcement, said it was a good sign the American economy was seeing a resurgence, but promised to examine the challenges that a lower dollar poses for the Canadian economy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

ECONOMY

Faith restored
Wednesday's action reflects the U.S. Federal Reserve's belief that the American economy has finally regained enough strength 6 ½ years after the Great Recession ended to withstand modestly higher borrowing rates.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Shaw buying Wind Mobile
Shaw Communications has reached an agreement to buy Wind Mobile in a transaction valued at $1.6 billion. The Calgary-based telecommunications company says it will acquire a full interest in parent company Mid-Bowline Group, which owns Wind. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Thursday, December 17, 2015

CHANTAL HÉBERT: ON THE SENATE SCANDAL (IT'S STILL ON)

Gone are the days when the re-election of a government, the reputation of a sitting prime minister or the ascent of an Opposition leader could hang in the balance of the Duffy trial.

It is not totally true to say that the legal travails of Stephen Harper's former star senator are no longer of any real consequence to anyone but himself. A dozen of Mike Duffy's past and present Senate colleagues have cause to wait for the trial verdict with baited breath.

They are on the list of current or ex-senators whose expense claims were brought to the attention of the RCMP over the past two years. Take Pamela Wallin, who is back in the upper house since the election. There has not been a word on where she stands since the RCMP reportedly transferred her file to the Crown prosecutors last summer.

The odds that the other senators engulfed in the scandal will be charged and/or taken to trial stand to decrease if Duffy is found not guilty of all or most of the 31 criminal charges laid against him.

That being said, gone are the days when the re-election of a government, the reputation of a sitting prime minister or the ascent of a prosecutorial Opposition leader could be presumed to hang in the balance of the Duffy trial.

At this time last year, Duffy, Harper and Thomas Mulcair were the leading co-stars in a high-stakes political drama that was deemed to have the potential to reshape the electoral landscape.

Harper is headed for political retirement, but not mostly for what the Duffy trial has brought to light.

Twelve months later, there has yet to be a definitive resolution to the Senate spending saga but the storyline has fizzled out; the audience has lost interest; the spotlight has shifted and the curtain has fallen in whole or in part on its main protagonists.

That is as good a measure of what a difference a year in politics can make.

At this time last year, Harper looked well placed to make electoral history by winning a fourth consecutive mandate. The rise to pre-eminence of the security issue in the wake of the Parliament Hill shootings had given his party a second wind. For the first time since the Senate scandal, the Conservatives were seeing positive omens in public opinion.

That gave rise to trepidation about the upcoming Duffy trial and even talk of an early election to minimize the risks.

These days, most Harper-related speculation is of an idle variety. It revolves around the timing of his definitive departure from the House of Commons. Most expect it will come sooner rather than later. Some wonder why it has not happened yet.

For the record, there is nothing exceptional about the fact that Harper is still an MP. It may be one of the more normal features of his exit from politics. Paul Martin was defeated in January 2006 but resigned his seat only in March.

As for Mulcair, 12 long months ago he was basking in the glowing reviews of his performance as chief-questioner of the government in the Commons.

The NDP leader was never more on a roll than over the time of the Senate scandal. It was in its wake that he came to have a larger-than-life presence in question period. He will probably go down in modern Canadian history as the official Opposition leader who will have asked the most questions of a government over the course of a single session.

A year later, Mulcair's parliamentary persona feels too big for the support role of leader of the third party in the House. In the new House of Commons, he looks like a square peg in a round hole. At least for the time being, his famous prosecutorial skills are wasted on a Liberal prime minister that too many New Democrats for comfort like better than they do their own leader.

At year's end, Harper is headed for political retirement but not mostly for what the Duffy trial has brought to light. The betting is that Mulcair — whose oratory feats on the Senate turned out to be wasted on the country's voters — will not be far behind.

As for Duffy, except among a handful of allegedly profligate senators, his ultimate fate is a matter of relative indifference.

The Senate saga was the biggest political drama of the last federal decade but it earned none of its main actors a curtain call.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer. Her column appears in Metro every Thursday.

THE MICROTREND: Battle roy-owl

The forest isn't big enough for both of them. A turf war has broken out in the Pacific Northwest, and the instigator is the barred owl. Habit degradation in the Prairies has been driving the hearty invasive species west into the stomping grounds of the northern spotted owl. And the barred owl is having a hoot out-eating and out-breeding everything in its path. Everywhere it goes, the spotted owl is declining fast: By up to 77 per cent in Washington and 68 per cent in Oregon since 1985, says a new U.S. study. Hardly a handful are left in B.C. As if it wasn't tough enough out there for a spotted owl: Development has destroyed the old-growth trees where it likes to nest and pushed it away from its favourite prey — a major problem for these polka-dotted picky eaters. The areas where spotted owl populations are sliding slowest have gotten human help with removing the nasty new neighbours. SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

A lengthy disruption over Katie the dog gives me hope

Toronto ground to a halt for two hours yesterday over the life-and-death drama of Katie, the German shepherd.

The north-south subway line was out of service while transit workers rescued the dog from the track rails, where she mysteriously got caught.

Media live-tweeted updates from the scene ("Did she make it?" my colleagues kept asking as they checked Twitter) and a few posted photos of Katie on a stretcher, wrapped in a bloodied blanket. For some, it was just too much.

"@680NEWS DELETE THIS INSENSITIVE PICTURE Would you post a picture of a person trapped on tracks? #topoli #Katie" tweeted @Hohummmm.

"RIP," wrote another, after news broke Katie had been put down. "Very sad incident on the TTC tracks today," the mayor tweeted.

What kind people live in this city, I thought, as a dog swallowed our short attention spans and #katie started trending across Toronto. For others, that was all too much, too.

"Shuttle buses, thousands of people having their afternoon commute ruined, for a dog," an acquaintance texted. "Would the line have been shut for a raccoon? A squirrel? A rat?"

"What an incredible waste," he went on. "I hope the irresponsible dog owner gets the bill."

This is, to quote my acquaintance, an "incredible example of something," or perhaps two things: our capacity to care, and our capacity to care on a scale.

A few years ago, researchers tested people's sympathy for humans (adult and baby) and dogs (adult and puppy).

"The "winner" was not the puppy but the human infant. The puppy, however, came in a close second with the adult dog not far behind," Wired magazine reported, while noting that another study found people are more willing to save their personal pet than a "foreign tourist."

This could be considered depressing, but I don't think so. First, everyone hates tourists. More importantly, a lengthy disruption over a dog gives me cause for hope.

It shows that people do care about other beings, despite the common assumption we're living in the most selfish, dehumanizing society created.

Normally, shutdowns turn trains and subway stations into sweltering hellholes. This time, they were hellholes with a heart.

And I have faith the empathy hierarchy can be manipulated.

I'm sure we'll one day learn about the superior intellect of the racoon (perhaps even the rat) and start adopting them as pets, thus improving the likelihood we'd stall a subway to save one. Tourists, though — they're screwed.

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metro LIFE

Your essential daily news

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Also on our Over it! list: Enough with the spoiler alerts and trigger warnings. Manage yourself, already.

Over it! 2015 edition

Spoiler alert: This is an unscientific look at some popular terms and favourite things of the year that we need to leave behind come 2016 because, frankly, they give us a headache. For your consideration and in no particular order, here they are: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

1 Adult colouring books

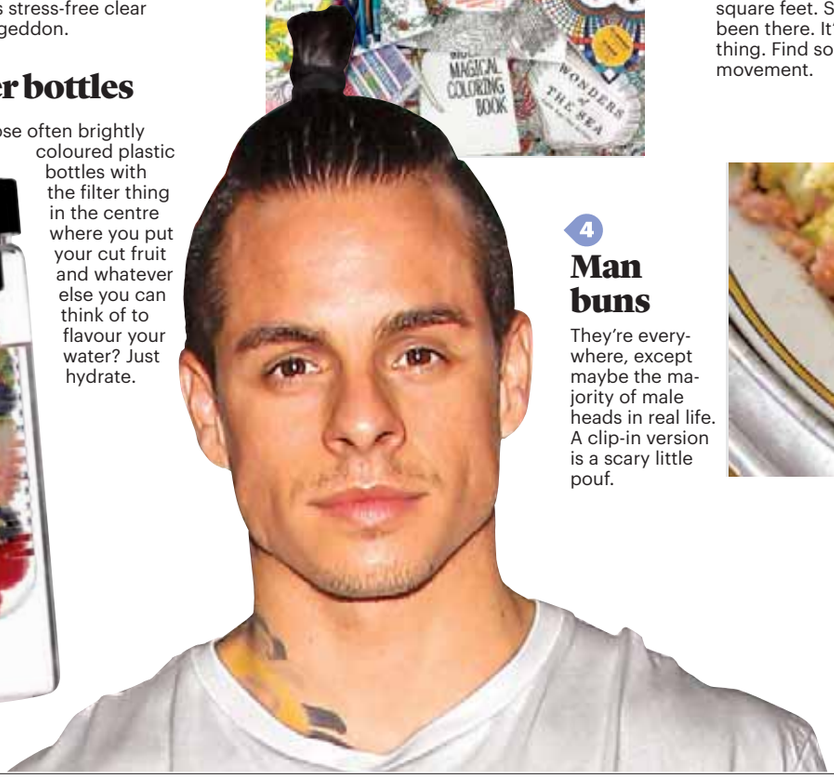
Yes, millions sold! Yes, mindfulness! Yes, beautiful flowers and geometric patterns and all manner of animal life and wonder! We now have enough things for grown-ups to colour to keep us stress-free clear through to Armageddon.

2 Tiny houses

According to Thetinylife.com, the typical U.S. home is about 2,600 square feet. The typical tiny house is 100- to-400-square feet. Some of us have been there. It's not a pretty thing. Find some other social movement.

3 Diffuser bottles

You know those often brightly coloured plastic bottles with the filter thing in the centre where you put your cut fruit and whatever else you can think of to flavour your water? Just hydrate.



4 Man buns

They're everywhere, except maybe the majority of male heads in real life. A clip-in version is a scary little pouf.

5 Cauliflower

Wayyyy back in 2013, the question was posed: is cauliflower the new kale? It's 2015, people who have just discovered baked and roasted cauliflower, mashed cauliflower, cauliflower pasta sauce, cauliflower pizza crust and fancy things to do with what is a fine thing now delicately plated in fine restaurants.

6 Artisanal and curated

You want only the best for us. You are craftspeople and very dedicated and high masters of your worlds and are willing to make us better people by taking our money and you work very, very hard. You want us to like the things that you like or do or buy.

SHOPPERS DRUG MART
SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 36

Call it magic, call it theory, call it true

LOST CIVILIZATION

Author Graham Hancock is back with alt history sequel

Sue Carter
For Metro Canada

Twenty years ago, when Graham Hancock's book Fingerprints of the Gods was first published, it caused quite the stir among archaeologists, historians and conspiracy theorists. After years of research, the U.K. journalist hypothesized that 12,800 years ago, a massive, cataclysmic comet had hit the Earth, essentially wiping out a highly advanced ancient civilization. The remaining survivors then canvassed the world, landing in such places as Egypt, Turkey and Peru, in hopes of spreading their wisdom. Some of those sages or magicians as they were known, were responsible for constructing such wonders as the Sphinx, which Hancock's book suggests actually predated the ancient Egyptians.

Although Hancock's theories of a lost civilization were dismissed by experts (he's been referred to as both a pseudoscientist and a "Pyramidiot"), readers didn't care — and neither did he. The book sold more than 7 million copies worldwide, and turned Hancock into an icon of the "alternative history" movement. He has now returned with more evidence to back up his first book with its sequel, Magicians of the Gods.

Hancock still has his fair share of naysayers, but it's a new generation of younger fans who showed up at his recent sold-out 22-stop tour across the U.S. and Canada. His message is appealing to younger, social-media-savvy readers, many of who are cynical about old-school power structures in the aftermath of whistleblowers such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden.

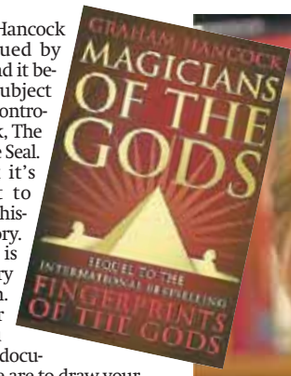
"There is a deep distrust of authority now. It's grounded; it's not a conspiracy theory. We know that we've been lied to quite often, for example, about the Iraq War. I think those lies have devalued the currency of authority," says Hancock, who describes Magicians of the Gods as a fundamentally rebellious book. "It's not enough for an archaeologist to say anymore, 'Look, I know this is how things are.' It turns people off now. They'd rather see people engage with the ideas."

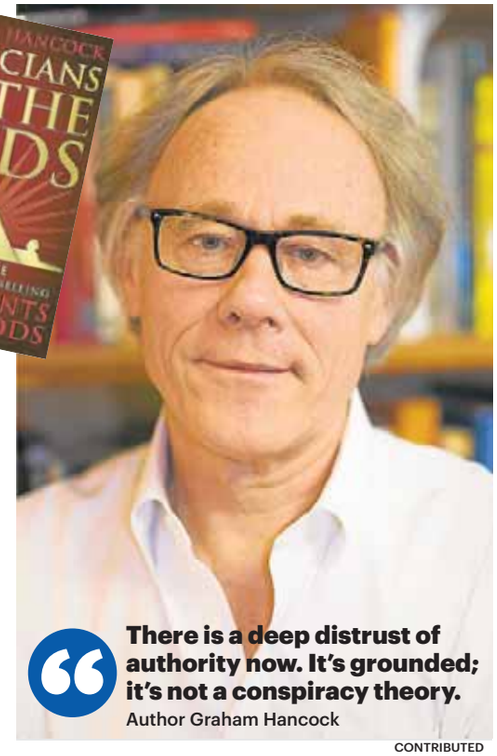
As Hancock was writing his first book, he says he couldn't "point out that smoking gun," but that within the last eight years, mainstream science journals have presented more evidence that prove his theory about the massive extinction. Perhaps the most challenging or troublesome idea in Magicians of the Gods is the suggestion that a 20-mile-wide fragment of the original comet is potentially going to hit Earth in 2030 — an event referred to in various cultures as the "Great Return." When asked how we should prepare for such an occasion, Hancock says that as a journalist, it's his role to report the evidence as he uncovers it, not suggest a course of action.

Hancock's background as a reporter is how he was introduced to alternative history in the first place. During the 1970s and '80s, he covered East Africa for the London Times and The Economist. While in Ethiopia he became intrigued with a story about how the lost covenant of the ark has been hidden in the country for centuries. Although experts debunked the claim, Hancock was intrigued by the story and it became the subject of his first controversial book, The Sign and the Seal.

"I think it's important to realize that history is a story. And that it is often a story told by men. The further back you go, the less documents there are to draw your historical narratives from. The more it becomes a matter of speculation, and putting bits and pieces together," he says. "It's really a suggestion, an interpretation, a construing of data. I don't think it's healthy for this very important data about our past, who we are, and what we're doing here to be entrusted solely in the hands of a very small group of scholars. Twenty years ago it was enough for professor X or Y to say this is impossible, it can't be true. But that doesn't work today."

Sue Carter is the editor at Quill & Quire magazine.





There is a deep distrust of authority now. It's grounded; it's not a conspiracy theory.
Author Graham Hancock

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A BRAND NEW COLLECTION OF *VINYL CAFE* STORIES, FROM THE INIMITABLE STUART McLEAN

Dave and Morley are growing older—their marriage has mellowed and deepened like a fine wine.

Sam has developed a palate for girls and Gruyère, and Steph's found happiness with an artist who photographs roadkill.

Everyone's growing wiser and worldlier—well, almost everyone.

In this fresh instalment of *Vinyl Cafe* stories, the more things change, the more they stay the same ...

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BOOK BRIEFS

CBC's Canada Reads reveals long list

Books by revered novelists including Lawrence Hill, Michael Crummey and Kate Pullinger are among those on the long list for CBC's 2016 Canada Reads competition.

Hill is on the list with The Illegal (HarperCollins), Crummey is there with Sweetland (Anchor Canada) and Pullinger made the cut with Landing Gear (Anchor Canada).

CBC personality and author Wab Kinew is returning for a second year as host of the annual literature debate.

This year's theme is starting over and will feature books "about transformation and second chances, stories of migrants, immigrants and others who are choosing — or forced — to make major changes in their lives," says a release.

A total of 15 books are on the long list for the 15th edition of the program, in which high-profile personalities defend a book until a winner is chosen. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rules to live by, as told by a knight

INTERVIEW

Hawke says he drew on many sources for stories' wisdom

Actor-author Ethan Hawke took on modern-day parenting challenges with the help of a fictitious 15th-century Cornish knight.

His young adult book, Rules for a Knight, grew from Hawke's "tinkering" with stories he had written over the years for his own kids. The parables take the form of a letter from the knight, introduced as Hawke's ancestor, to his four children about living purposeful, ethical lives as he prepares to go into battle.

"It's a dialogue about some entry-level philosophical ideas that I think could be nice for young people," Hawke, 45, said.

They're warm and simply, yet effectively, written, although Hawke insists: "I have no ownership over any of these stories . . . I really view myself as the editor of this; anything that's valuable in this didn't come from me."

The handsome, palm-sized book is bound in emerald cloth and each chapter features whimsical pencil drawings done by his wife, Ryan Hawke.

Each chapter explores one of 20 virtues by telling a parable, sharing what the knight learned as he grew from a young apprentice into adulthood.

The stories are based on wisdom from "other knights" Hawke credits in the back of the book — among them Muhammad Ali, Vince Lombardi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Boyhood and Before Sunrise trilogy director Richard Linklater and late actor River Phoenix.

Like the knight in the book, Hawke has four children: daughter Maya, 17, and son Levon, 13, with ex-wife Uma Thurman and daughters Clementine, 7, and 4-year-old Indiana with wife Ryan Hawke.

He liked to use these stories to spark conversations with his kids about rules and behaviours.

"They're hard conversations to have, and part of it for me, doing a lot of my parenting from the handicapped vantage point of a divorcee . . . I'd be apart from the kids," Hawke explained.

"I have them every other weekend and there are all these things I wanted to talk about and they never come up on their own."

Establishing clarity and consistency around basic rules means less confusion for his children. But kids also ask "why?"

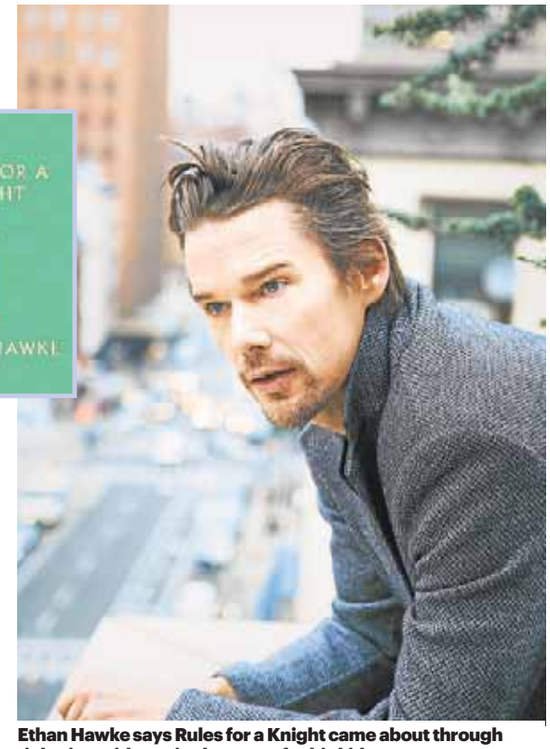
And Hawke used the knight's stories to provide real-life examples about difficult-to-define qualities such as humility and grace.

"That's what it was for me and that's the reason to publish it," Hawke explained.

"I'm an actor. I don't have to have a real job and this is something I can do with my time that's been fun over the past 10 years or so."

The book concludes with an epic poem, The Ballad of the Forty-Four Pointed Deer, which Hawke said was inspired by the story of the Buddha's life as a banyan deer taken from India's Jataka Tales.

"I love the poem and I'm happy about it but the heart of that poem is old text," Hawke said. "The message of that poem is way beyond me." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Ethan Hawke says Rules for a Knight came about through tinkering with stories he wrote for his kids. HANDOUT

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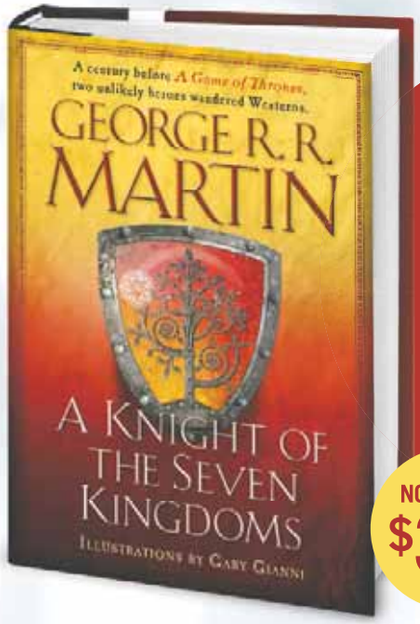
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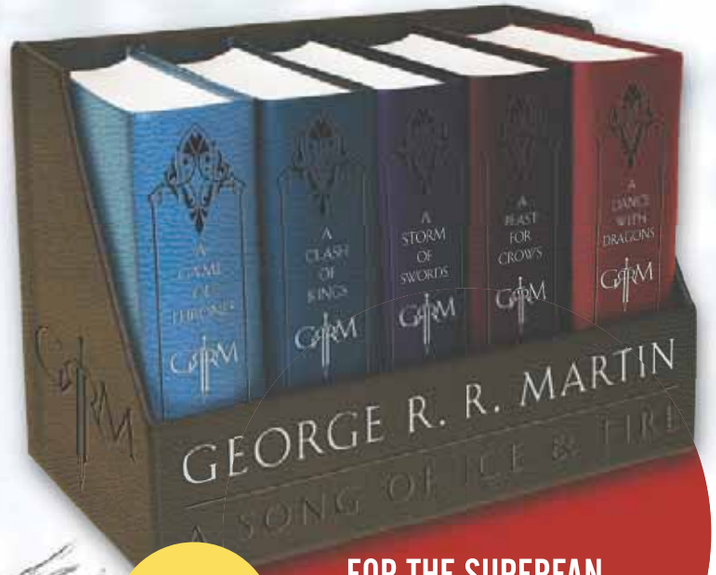

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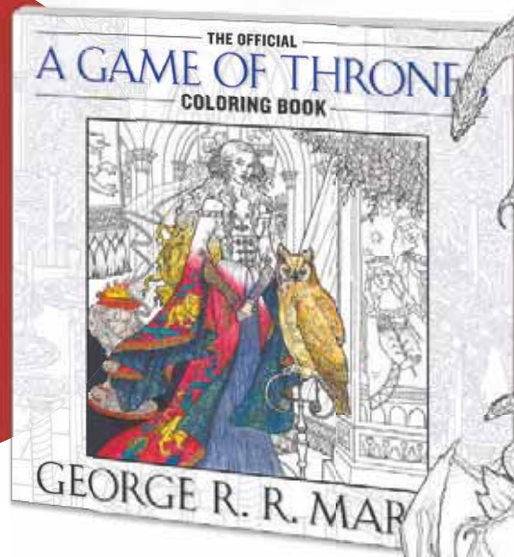

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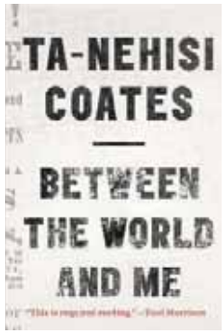
This year's buzziest books

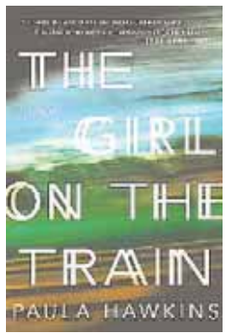
1 Why Not Me? By Mindy Kaling

A follow-up to her 2011 book, Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns), Mindy Kaling scored herself another instant best-seller with Why Not Me? Similar in style to her first book, Why Not Me? is a collection of laugh-out-loud essays with heart, ranging from stories about work, romance and body acceptance. Her next book will be co-authored with her ex-boyfriend-turned-friend B.J. Novak, and the two reportedly are raking in $7.5 million for it.



2 Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Toni Morrison called Ta-Nehisi Coates' tome Between the world and Me required reading, and it's easy to understand why. Coates asks big, thought-provoking questions about race in America, framing it as a letter to his teenage son. In it, he attempts to explain the ugly truths about the country's racial divide, from the Civil War to present day tensions.



3 The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

The Girl on the Train was lauded as "the next Gone Girl" by a slew of critics. It's an emotional thriller about a woman who sees the same couple on her commute to and from work each day. She builds a fictional story about them in her mind, but things get complicated when she actually befriends them. An alcoholic, she makes for an unreliable narrator, which just makes things more interesting.

4 Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee

A frenzy erupted when it was announced that To Kill A Mockingbird author Harper Lee would release a new novel, her first in decades. Was she forced into it? Did she need the money? Was she of sound mind? The controversy aside, The novel, sold over 1 million copies in one week and over 3 million after a month, making it the best-selling book in HarperCollins' history.

5 Modern Romance by Aziz Ansari

The Parks and Rec star is killing it with his Netflix show Masters of None, but his first book, Modern Romance, isn't doing too shabby either: It became a best-seller immediately after its release and was praised by critics as well as fans. Similar in voice to his stand-up, Ansari shares his personal stories about dating, while asking deeper questions such as what is love? And, do soulmates actually exist?

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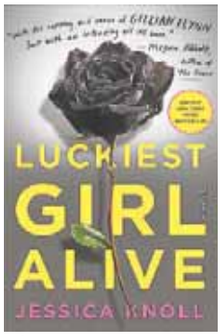
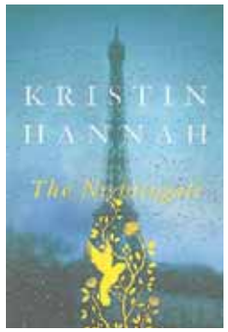
Whether your New Year's resolution is to join a book club or you're looking to make your commute more enjoyable, this 2015 list takes into account buzz, critic reviews and copies sold. EMILY LAURENCE/METRO NEW YORK



6 Luckiest Girl Alive by Jessica Knoll

Reese Witherspoon loved this young adult novel so much that her production company quickly snatched up the rights. Full of shocking plot twists, it's about a woman who seems to have it all, but there is something about her past that haunts her. The mystery stems from her teen years, when she was a misfit at a fancy private school. The book shocks all the way to the last page.

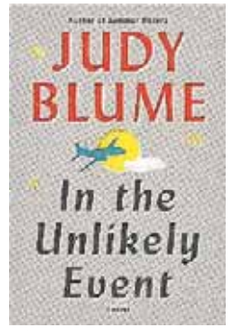


7 The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah

Taking into account reader reviews from Goodreads and Amazon, virtually everyone who reads The Nightingale loves it. The book centers on an elderly woman thinking about her past, specifically what it was like to be a woman in France during World War II. The book shows the hardships of being a woman during wartime, something that isn't often talked about.

8 Spinster by Kate Bolick

In the memoir that spawned dozens of think-pieces, The Atlantic editor Kate Bolick writes about her decision to actively choose the single life. Bolick's book also gives a history of what it was like to be an unattached woman in eras past. Spinster sparked a fresh debate about what it means to have it all, and raised some unexpected points.



9 In the Unlikely Event by Judy Blume

Judy Blume is widely celebrated as a young adult novelist, but her latest release — her first since 1998 — proved she has something to offer adults, too. Based loosely on the true events of a series of plane crashes that occurred between 1951 and 1952, the novel is an intergenerational family drama.

STOCKING STUFFER

A colouring book to Trump them all

There aren't many people more polarizing than Donald Trump.

His supporters show their love with pride and his haters are equally as vocal. Now there's a Donald Trump coloring book that will let you express however you feel toward the presidential candidate.

The Trump Coloring Book hits the shelves on Dec. 15.

Think he's a superhero? Color his costume red and blue, like a true American hero.

Think he's the worst thing to happen to the United States since the Civil War? Make his cape and tights an evil black and red.

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Star Wars: A fashionable force

COSTUME

Legacy lives on with wardrobe in latest movie installment

From Obi-Wan Kenobi's Jedi robes to Darth Vader's mask and Princess Leia's golden bikini, costumes featured in Star Wars are arguably as famous as the franchise's characters themselves.

As The Force Awakens arrives in theatres on Friday, costume curators and creators can't wait to see how fashion plays a role in the latest instalment.

"From the prequels, you look at some of Natalie Portman's gowns, they're so lavish, they're so fashionable. And what that says to me is that society is doing well," said Saul Drake, project director of the Smithsonian travelling exhibition Rebel, Jedi, Princess, Queen: Star Wars and the Power of Costume.

"What's really interesting to see for The Force Awakens costumes is that it's kind of almost a return to form for the classic style of costume. They're very sparse, they're very monotone, there's not a lot of embellishment on there. And without even seeing the movie, what that tells me is that the society is not doing that well. There's struggle going on.

"It's interesting to see how those costumes not only create character, but they also reflect what's going on in the Star Wars movies in that time period."

There's not a lot of embellishment... Without even seeing the movie, what that tells me is that the society is not doing that well.
Saul Drake, Smithsonian

A selection of designs from The Force Awakens are among the 70 costumes currently on display in the Smithsonian's exhibition at the Discovery Times Square centre in New York until Sept. 5, 2016.

Styles sported by newcomers Finn (John Boyega) and Rey (Daisy Ridley) are also featured alongside notable ensembles from the six previous films spanning from the 1977 debut to 2002's Attack of the Clones.

Toronto-based costume and set designer Sarah Armstrong said she's noted some parallels between the designs she's seen so far on Finn and Rey and those worn by their onscreen predecessors Han Solo and Leia (Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher.)

They harken back to fashions from the original movies, which encompassed Asian-inspired designs with simple shapes alongside military-influenced styles, Armstrong said.

"I think it's incredible how the original designer (John Mollo) was able to blend and marry the Samurai with a modern warrior and build archetypes that have remained timeless," said Armstrong. "You can't ignore that. And there are very few films out there that have been able to do that.

"I think that's also one of the reasons it's been so successful because it's a unique thing on its own, and that's why it still retains its impact."

Among the most enduring costumes from the film franchise is its most revealing.

The gilded bikini worn onscreen by Fisher in 1983's Return of the Jedi has remained perennially popular — and parodied — ever since.

Comedian Amy Schumer struck a suggestive pose with C-3PO while dressed as Leia on the August cover of GQ. Montreal label UNTTLD was awarded a $15,000 prize in a Star Wars costume contest held during Toronto's World MasterCard Fashion Week in October with their interpretation of Leia's look.

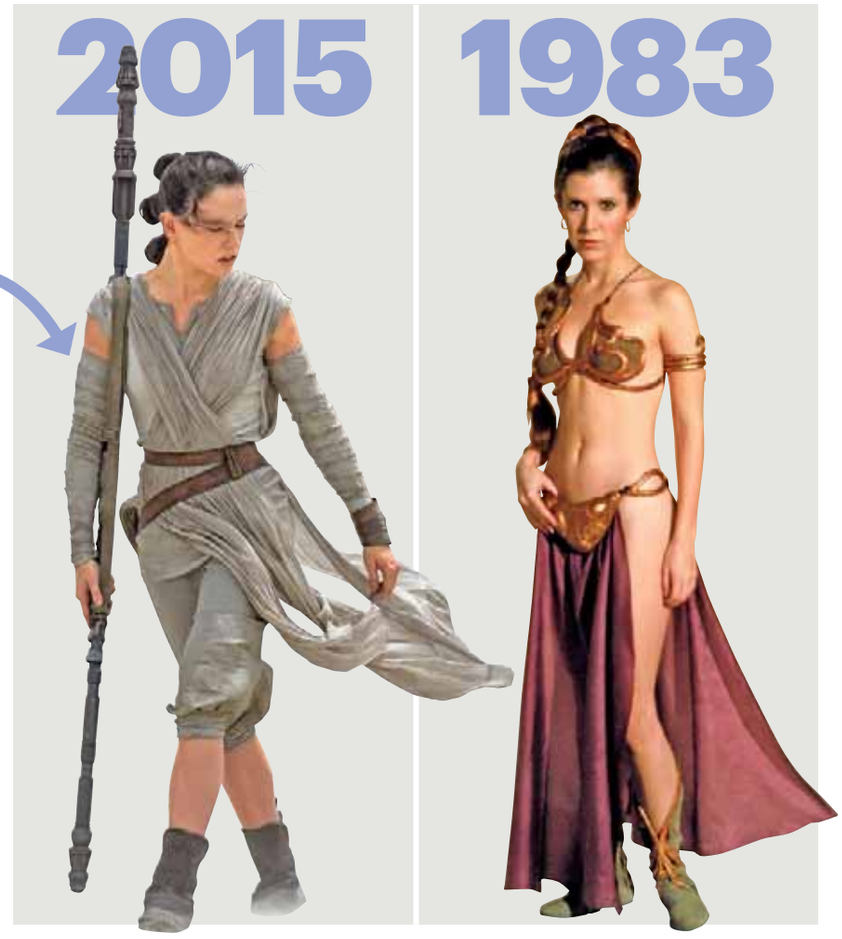
Recent published reports suggested that Disney plans to retire the two-piece from use in product sales and marketing. Company representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"The fact that it it's a very male-centred world makes anything that Leia wore stand out," Armstrong said. "Leia's costumes are very (much) drawn on some of the male shapes but are very feminine."

Armstrong said the fashion formula established early in the Star Wars series was "incredibly successful" and it would be wise for those now steering the franchise not to veer too far off-course.

"They'll want to have something to appeal to the old fans, the people like me that saw it in '77, and they're going to want to appeal to a whole new generation of people. ... Once they've had success with this first one, you might see them try to take some more liberties."

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Big Bang's big lead up

With Sheldon and Amy about to have sex on the long-running sitcom, here's a look back at key moments in their relationship. Beware: spoilers ahead. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

ALL PHOTOS: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE/ISTOCK/CONTRIBUTED

MIDSEASON FINALE

The Opening Night Excitation

For nine seasons, the sexuality of Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons) on The Big Bang Theory has been a rich source of speculation. Essays devoted to his asexuality, sexual orientation and overall social survival skills have graced publications big and small, sending viewers into a frenzy when the character finally settled into a relationship with Amy Farrah Fowler (Mayim Bialik). Still, the couple could barely hold hands in public, let alone make out or get physical between the sheets. Until now, that is. On Thursday's midseason finale (8 p.m. on CTV and CBS), The Opening Night Excitation, Sheldon decides to skip the opening night of Star Wars to spend Amy's birthday with her now that they're back together. His gift? Finally giving in to coitus. "Believe it or not they have been dating on and off for five-and-a-half years now, and that was enough time for Amy to wait," showrunner Steven Molaro told Torstar News Service. "It just seemed like the perfect culmination of their breakup story arc, especially with the upcoming release of Star Wars." Helping the narrative along is Bob Newhart, who reprises his award-winning role as Professor Proton. He'll appear in a dream sequence to give Sheldon some much-needed advice. "This will bring them closer than they've ever been," said Molaro. "This breakup was good for them both as individuals and for the relationship as well." Speaking of the relationship, Molaro was able to lend an insider's perspective to some of the biggest Sheldon and Amy moments on The Big Bang Theory, and what they mean now that the couple has officially "hooked up."

SEASON 7, EPISODE 15,

The first (real) kiss

Sheldon may have first kissed Amy to prove a point, but 11 seconds later it became clear that he liked it a lot more than he thought he would. Turns out even a man who aspired to be as emotionless as Spock can get weak in the knees. "We love these characters and they're real to us," Molaro says. "I remember when we were writing that kiss on the train, we weren't fighting in the writers' room, but there was a tension and a heat to our debating how it should play out."

SEASON 8, EPISODE 8

The first "I love you"

Sheldon may have been freaked out by the expectations of a prom, but he had no qualms about how he felt toward Amy. When she couldn't spit out the words "I love you," he went first with a sweet little, "I love you, too." "There was definitely some heated discussion about how exactly it should go down, but when we landed on the thought that Amy was struggling to get the words out, and that their first I love you was actually an I love you too, that seemed really interesting and appealing to us," Molaro says.

SEASON 4, EPISODE 20

The sex rumour

Before Thursday night, the closest Amy and Sheldon got to being intimate was when they decided to put a gossip theory to the test: by spreading the rumour that they had sex. "When Penny (Kaley Cuoco) tells Koothrappali (Kunal Nayyar) that Sheldon and Amy were going to be intimate, Koothrappali said, 'Shut your ass.' . . . We were talking about how funny that was to us, and if there was a version of that that we could capture for when Penny and Bernadette (Melissa Rauch) tell Amy what they know about Sheldon's birthday present."

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HOUSE OF CARDS

Frank Underwood is just getting started

Frank Underwood is coming back to Netflix — and he's "only getting started."

That was the message Underwood — the U.S. president character played by Kevin Spacey in popular show House of Cards — delivered in a faux campaign commercial broadcast during the GOP presidential debate Tuesday night.

"It's a new day in America," the 30-second commercial begins, over images of farms, a city skyline, jets taking off and children running with American flags.

"Today, more people will go to work, return home to their families, and sleep more soundly than ever before. All because one man refuses to settle, putting people before politics. That man is Frank Underwood."

The show's fourth season of 13 episodes will premiere on Netflix on March 4.

Spacey shared the commercial on Twitter with the message, "If you dont (sic) like how the table is set, turn it over. Welcome to my campaign."

The actor also linked to Underwood's campaign website, fu2016.com.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

House of Cards returns for Season 4 in March. CONTRIBUTED

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Empire's emotional toll

THE SHOW: Empire, Season 2, Episode 10 (City/Fox)
THE MOMENT: The Spit

Five other series put together won't dazzle as much as five minutes of Taraji P. Henson in Empire.

Record mogul Cookie Lyon (Taraji P. Henson) is having quite the day. Award nominations are being announced, and her ex-husband Lucious (Terrence Howard) and two sons are candidates. She's hosting a concert at the prison where she did 17 years.

She's running interference for her openly gay son, who is secretly dating a woman (Alicia Keys). And she's racing to a boardroom vote, because scheming lesbian Mimi (Marissa Tomei) wants to kick Lucious out. Plus, she's doing it all in a skintight leather dress and a massive black-and-white striped fur chubbie. Just as Cookie's youngest son, Hakeem, is casting the deciding vote, who sidles in but Camilla (Naomi Campbell) — Hakeem's ex-girlfriend, and Tomei's new wife! Sporting a huge fur chubbie of her own! Camilla smirks. She has it rigged. Cookie spits in her face.

Wowza! Five other series put together won't dazzle you half as much as five minutes of Empire. Taraji P. Henson alone would be enough, but then there's her wardrobe! Plus production numbers (dancers on hoverboards! Singers in gold-spiked hot pants!). Major plot twists eight times an hour! And heartfelt speeches (prison is hard on women! Human sexuality is fluid! Black lives matter!). The spit isn't even the climax of this episode: a pregnant woman gets pushed down the stairs! A man storms in with a gun! Lucious and his son become rival nominees! Every week it's like this — I collapse on the sofa so spent that I want a cigarette. And I don't smoke.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

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GOSSIP BRIEFS

Lupita Nyong'o's clueless Star Wars audition

Hollywood can keep you busy, especially after you've won an Oscar for your film debut.

That might explain why Lupita Nyong'o didn't quite connect the dots when she had a meeting with J.J. Abrams a couple of years ago.

"I didn't really know what I was auditioning for," said Nyong'o, who plays the alien Maz Kanata in The Force Awakens, the latest Star Wars film. "I guess I thought I should find work, you know? I was so busy, I was working with adrenaline, so I went in and out.

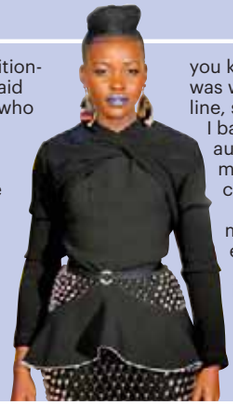
I barely remember that audition, and then two months later (Abrams) called me."

So what did this mystery audition entail, exactly?

"I remember crouching around and using my hands as a gun."

Sounds... fun?

NED EHRBAR/ METRO HOLLYWOOD



Lamar Odom is 'not doing great'

Not to bum you out too much so close to the holidays, but here's an update on convalescing brothel-patronizing Lamar Odom.

"He's not doing great," a source tells Entertainment Tonight. "His speech is still slurred and he can barely walk on his own yet. He forgets a lot of people's names — sometimes even his own. He definitely has some memory loss."

Those close to the former NBA star are still hoping for him to be "mentally fully recovered" in a year and a half's time, but the progress is frustratingly slow. Khloe Kardashian, for her part, posted a video to her website recently expressing her hopes for the future.

"Lord knows I've had stress and anxiety lately," she said. "This year has been absolutely horrible, but it's almost done. I'm just praying that 2016 will be better. It has to be."

NED EHRBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD

THE VOICE

Road getting rocky for Blake and Gwen

I'm sure it's just a total, complete coincidence that just after the latest season of The Voice ends, we get our first report of trouble in the romance between co-coaches Gwen Stefani and Blake Shelton.

Not suspicious at all, this.

So the duo, both recently divorced and involved in a "romance" that's been played up for the cameras during the most recent season of The Voice, are said to be hitting a rough patch after a backstage incident in which Shelton left his phone behind in the makeup room and Stefani witnessed a text message come in from his ex-wife, Miranda Lambert, according to In Touch.

"Gwen saw it and lost it. She found Blake and asked to speak to him privately, but he said he couldn't right then and there. She had tears running down her face and went and locked herself in her dressing room," a source says.

"Gwen has seen texts between Blake and Miranda. She's really a mess over this."

Is she, though?

Or is this all part of the predetermined plan? When did I become so cynical?

NED EHRBAR/ METRO HOLLYWOOD

The Weeknd in hot water with Bella Hadid

PARTY SCENE

The Canadian was reportedly spotted getting cozy with fans

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood

When will people learn that parties are not the best places to misbehave? You know, because other people can see you?

Singer The Weeknd apparently didn't realize this when he decided to get with a pair of eager young fans at a private party celebrating the release of his new album — a party from which 19-year-old model girlfriend (as in she's a model and his girlfriend, not a model girlfriend,) Bella Hadid was conspicuously absent.

"He went to an after-party at a private house in L.A.," a source tells Life & Style, where he hit it off with a blonde and a brunette.

"He was making out with both of them, going back and forth. Then they disappeared into a bedroom together."

But it's totally cool, I'm sure he just wanted to explain to them in private how much he loves his girlfriend.

Now, maybe I'm a little out of touch, but what's a Weeknd?

The Weeknd's girlfriend, model Bella Hadid, was not present at a steamy L.A. party. GETTY IMAGES

OH WHAT FUN IT IS TO BE DONE.

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Researchers in France develop light-emitting textile that could remove pollution from homes

CONDO TRENDS

UP Express, more subway among projects driving growth in condo sector

Duncan McAllister
For Metro Canada

ISTOCK

The transit factor

Several exciting new transit initiatives in the GTA will have a major impact on how people commute and where they live. Whether it's traffic congestion, the land transfer tax or the high cost of housing, more and more people are looking to make the move away from Toronto. With the GO train service, the UP Express, new regional transitways and subway extensions, more and more commuters are deciding to leave the car at home.

Union-Pearson link

The new Union-Pearson train link creates a new opportunity for condominium development along the line, which works well for commuters working in the downtown core and is equally convenient for airport employees and frequent flyers.

One such development is Triumph Developments' Howard Park residences in Roncesvalles Village, an eight-storey mid-rise boutique-style condominium featuring luxury finishes and large, private suite terraces. It's a four-minute walk to the UP Express.

Vaughan

Big changes are underway in the city of Vaughan. The Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension Project will provide an extension of the existing TTC subway system between Toronto and Vaughan.

Condo residents will benefit from the transit plans in communities such as Indigo Condominiums in the Village of Maple. The new transit-friendly condo development by Pemberton Group offers several choices: the GO Barrie rail line, GO buses, York Region Transit and the Toronto Transit Commission.

The neighbourhood offers culture and convenience, with attractions like Canada's Wonderland and SilverCity. Hot local restos include Farro Restaurant, Sorrento North Ristorante and the Stonefire Bar and Grill.

Howard Park residences in Roncesvalles Village is a four-minute walk to the new UP Express. CONTRIBUTED

Scarborough

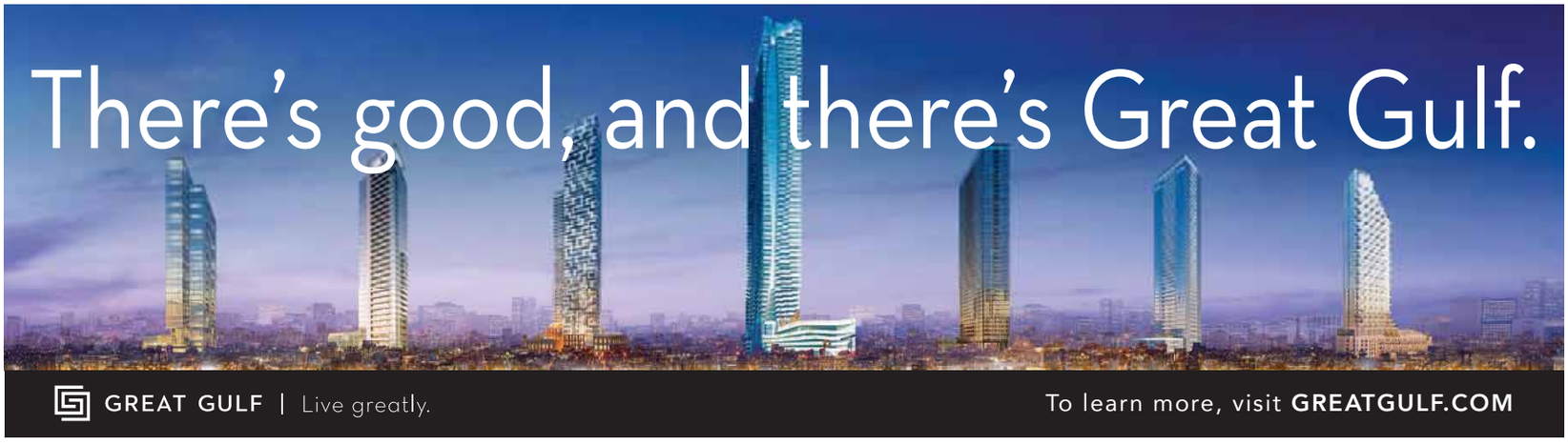
The Toronto Transit Commission is planning an extension to the Bloor-Danforth subway line to better serve Scarborough's 650,000 residents. Scarborough is experiencing rapid growth in the condo sector as a result of the announced transit initiatives, with several new projects to open soon. The proposed Scarborough subway extension will replace the aging Scarborough RT.

Yan Wang is the president of Gemterra Development Corporation, and he knows the Scarborough condo scene. Gemterra's Love condominiums and townhomes are located in the heart of Scarborough at Kennedy and Sheppard.

"Scarborough is in the midst of a massive boom. Its population is growing, real estate is in high demand and we know that it's beginning to attract even more development," says Wang.

The condo offers a range of suites designed by Tanner Hill Associates. The suite interiors are designed to maximize usable square footage, achieved by minimizing corridor space. The suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows and hardwood laminate flooring to enhance the open concept design.

The Love condominiums and townhomes in Scarborough, where the TTC is planning a subway extension. CONTRIBUTED



GTA learning from the best in the world

Bryan Tuckey
For Metro Canada

To help the building and development industry in the GTA grow and evolve, we search the globe for new and innovative ideas that can be adapted and implemented here.

BILD works with experts and home builders' associations around the world to educate our members on best practices for planning, developing and building new communities. Many ideas are imported and incorporated into the creation of new communities across the GTA and others provide inspiration for future projects.

By studying Danish architecture in Copenhagen, our members learned about building woodframe mid-rise buildings. This ensured they were ready when the province amended the Building Code to allow for woodframe buildings up to six storeys. Woodframe construction is prevalent in Copenhagen. The city is dominated by four- and six-storey buildings, most of them made of wood, rather than the glass towers we typically see in North American cities.

Since we want to continue to build greener homes in the GTA, our industry looked to Milan for innovative ideas. Italy introduced mandatory building energy labelling 10 years ago, which led to the adoption of some really interesting water and energy conservation mechanisms. Developers in Milan combine style and function by incorporating European design into their green features. This includes using rainwater collected from the buildings as public fountains, or planting hundreds of trees in planter boxes on condo balconies for benefits like shade and improved air quality.

Many ideas are imported and incorporated into the creation of new communities across the GTA and others provide inspiration for future projects.

American markets like Miami showcase great examples of marketing luxury condominiums with extravagant amenities. New-home buyers in the city are treated to over-the-top sales offices, larger suites and super-sized models. Purchasers are responsible for the interior design of their suites, allowing them to customize every aspect of their home to their liking.

In addition to learning other markets, the GTA also welcomes numerous groups from cities around the world. Over the years we have welcomed industry professionals from places like Austria, Denmark, China and Russia to showcase our communities and building practices.

BRYAN TUCKEY IS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION AND A LAND-USE PLANNER WHO HAS WORKED FOR MUNICIPAL, REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @BILDGTA, FACEBOOK.COM/BILDGTA, AND BILDBLOGS.CA.

LEGAL MATTERS

How to avoid a last-minute scramble for mortgage funds

Jeffrey Cowan
For Metro Canada

Q: I recently purchased a first home and obtained a mortgage from my bank. When I heard from my lawyer with respect to what funds I needed to bring in to close the transaction, I was surprised that the amount was greater than what I had budgeted for. My lawyer showed me the figure that she was getting for my mortgage, which was less by several thousand dollars than what my banker and I had discussed.

This led to me having to scramble around at the last minute and get further funds from my generous parents. How could this have been avoided?

A: What bankers sometimes don't realize is that there are standard deductions from mortgages that result in less money in their client's pockets. The first and largest cost is mortgage insurance that is mandatory for clients with high-ratio mortgages (when you have less than 20 per cent down payment). These fees are deducted from the amount borrowed; and don't forget there can be sales tax over and above the insurance fees.

Further fees can take the form of appraisal fees (a couple hundred dollars) and loan setup fees. If you are using a broker, there may be a deduction for lending fees or broker fees.

The main concern therefore is to directly question the person providing you with your financing to get them to set out in writing the NET amount you will be getting as a loan. That way, there will be no last-minute scramble and the stress that goes with it.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers.

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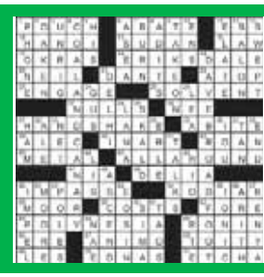

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CONTRIBUTED

All in the details in Burlington towns

Project overview

Phase 1 of Aldershot's newest masterplan transit-oriented community will consist of contemporary conventional and back-to-back townhomes, ideal for first-time homebuyers, families and young professionals. Every detail has been carefully selected with features typically reserved for custom homes, from aluminum and frosted glass garage doors to oversized windows and framed glass balconies.

Building amenities

Kitchens will feature polished quartz or granite countertops and cabinets with high-design colour blocking by UNION 31. Each home will have private outdoor space with either a spacious rooftop terrace or backyard.

Location and transit

Conveniently located next to the Aldershot GO station, residents of Stationwest are only steps away from public transit that can take them directly into downtown Toronto. The closest major intersection is Waterdown and Plains Road East, which makes it easy for residents to get onto major highways to visit surrounding communities and cities.

In the neighbourhood

From the Village of Waterdown's quaint downtown to the shopping districts of Aldershot's Plains Road, Stationwest offers urban accessibility but is immersed in celebrated parkland with the famous Royal Botanical Gardens and waterfront trails at LaSalle Park nearby.

NEED TO KNOW

What: Stationwest
Builder: Adi Development Group
Architect: ICON Architects
Interiors: UNION 31
Location: 101 Masonry Court, in Burlington
Building: In this first phase of Stationwest, there will be 60 back-to-backs and 66 traditional townhomes. Each townhome will be three storeys.
Sizes: From 1,200 to 2,200 sq .ft.
Pricing: From the low $400,000s
Suites: Two-bedroom and three-bedroom suites
Status: Pre-construction, registration now available
Occupancy: December 2016
Sales centre: Coming soon
Phone: 289-337-0766
Website: adidevelopments.com
Email: stationwest@adidevelopments.com

P.K. Subban weighed in on Pee-Kay vs. Pay-Kah: "Since we're changing the pronunciation of my name, just start calling me Denzel."

Sudden depth in net gives Leafs room to breathe

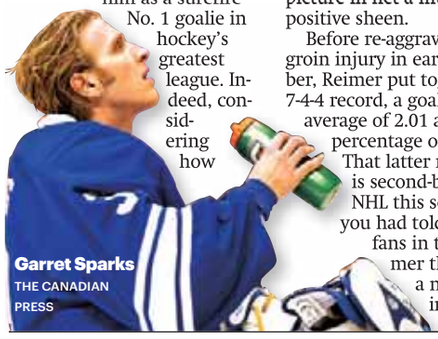
PROTEAU-TYPE

Adam Proteau

Jonathan Bernier's return to NHL action didn't end ideally.

In allowing five goals and losing to the Lightning Tuesday during his first game as a Maple Leaf since a stint with the AHL Marlies, Bernier played himself out of a second straight start; Buds head coach Mike Babcock confirmed Wednesday that rookie Garret Sparks will play Thursday against San Jose.

I hope you don't read that paragraph and think Bernier's time as a Leaf is over, because I don't believe that to be true. I think Toronto brass believes the 27-year-old can improve his play back to the point when people spoke of him as a surefire No. 1 goalie in hockey's greatest league. Indeed, considering how far James Reimer has come in the past year, nobody can say with certainty the same won't happen for Bernier.



Garret Sparks THE CANADIAN PRESS

PRIME REIMER

James Reimer had claimed the No. 1 spot after going 7-4-4 with a 2.01 GAA and a .935 save percentage but has not played since Dec. 3 due to groin problems. THE CANADIAN PRESS

But whether or not Bernier rebounds from his struggles, the Leafs must be feeling better about their netminding situation through one-third of the season. Bernier's issues are concerning. but the play of Reimer — and, to a lesser degree, of Sparks — as well as the state of the goalie market in general is giving Toronto's picture in net a much more positive sheen.

Before re-aggravating a groin injury in early December, Reimer put together a 7-4-4 record, a goals-against average of 2.01 and a save percentage of .935. That latter number is second-best in the NHL this season. If you had told Leafs fans in the summer they'd have a netminder in the top five in save percentage — let alone, top two — they'd have been elated. The 27-year-old is an unrestricted free agent at season's end, and the Buds have the option to re-sign him or move him at or before the Feb. 29 trade deadline. Either way — whether they deal him to help their rebuild, or keep him as the No. 1 for the foreseeable future — Toronto is benefitting from Reimer's resurgence.

Jonathan Bernier allowed five goals on 27 shots as the Leafs blew a 3-1 lead en route to a 5-4 overtime loss to the Lightning on Tuesday night. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sparks is five years younger than Reimer, but he's availed himself well since he was recalled from the Marlies in late November, building a 3-1-0 mark, 2.20 goals-against average and .920 save percentage. If things don't work out with Bernier, you can see where the Buds might go with a Reimer-Sparks tandem. If not, there's always the trade or free agent route, and an abundance of talent either seeking a first, second or last chance. Sometimes those reclamation projects turn out well (see Devan Dubnyk in Minnesota).

However, that's thinking too far ahead. As it stands, goaltending isn't Toronto's biggest concern. Producing offence is and Bernier can't score goals.

IN BRIEF

Frazier heading to South Side in 7-player swap

The White Sox were looking to add some pop while solidifying third base, and they are counting on Todd Frazier to provide it.

The All-Star third baseman was acquired from the Cincinnati Reds on Wednesday as part of seven-player trade that also included the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Todd Frazier GETTY IMAGES

L.A. received outfielder Trayce Thompson, right-hander Frankie Montas and second baseman Micah Johnson from the White Sox, and Cincinnati got infielders Brandon Dixon and Jose Peraza and outfielder Scott Schebler from the Dodgers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fury re-sign de Guzman

Scarborough's Julian de Guzman has re-signed with Ottawa Fury FC of the North American Soccer League.

Julian de Guzman GETTY IMAGES

De Guzman, 34, helped the Fury to the NASL final, although he had to miss the championship game to captain Canada in a World Cup qualifier. Ottawa lost 3-2 to the New York Cosmos. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLS

TFC look to Moor for back-line stability

Toronto FC's defensive overhaul moved significantly forward Wednesday with the signing of veteran free agent Drew Moor.

The 11-year MLS centre back, who had spent the last six-plus seasons in Colorado, will be tasked with reinforcing a Toronto defence that gave up a league-worst 58 goals in 2015.

In acquiring the 31-year-old Moor, TFC hopes to have found the defensive lynchpin that was so glaringly absent in 2015.

"He's a winner, he's a veteran defender. He has very strong leadership qualities," said GM Tim Bezbatchenko.

"We saw that Drew could be a key piece in the puzzle as we looked to solidify our back line," he added.

The Rapids finished last in the Western Conference last season with a 9-15-10 record but only conceded 43 goals.

Bezbatchenko remains on the lookout for a veteran goalkeeper and a right back, with fullback Steven Beitashour reportedly linked to Toronto. The Vancouver Whitecaps elected not to pick up the option of the 28-year-old Iranian international.

58

Toronto FC allowed a MLS-worst 58 goals in the 2015 season.

Moor earned $270,500 last season, his third as Rapids captain. He is restricted to a 15 per cent raise from Toronto under the collective bargaining agreement.

Bezbatchenko now has a glut of defenders, some with big-ticket salaries.

Polish international Damien Perquis ($372,500 last season), Moroccan international Ahmed Kantari ($345,000), Josh Williams ($125,000) and Eriq Zavaleta ($115,600) all saw time at centre back last season. TFC also has Nick Hagglund and Clement Simonin (both $60,000).

"We're still exploring our options, not just at centre back but at all our positions," said Bezbatchenko. "I don't think we're done in this off-season by any means." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Drew Moor, right, with MLS all-stars, chases Tottenham's Harry Kane last July in Commerce City, Colo. DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES

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NBA IN BRIEF

Magic Frye up Charlotte in comfortable victory

Channing Frye had a season-high 17 points and all five starters scored in double figures to help the Orlando Magic rout the Charlotte Hornets 113-98 on Wednesday night.

Evan Fournier had 15 points, Nik Vucevic had 14 points and eight rebounds, Elfrid Payton had 12 points and nine assists and Tobias Harris had 13 points for Orlando.

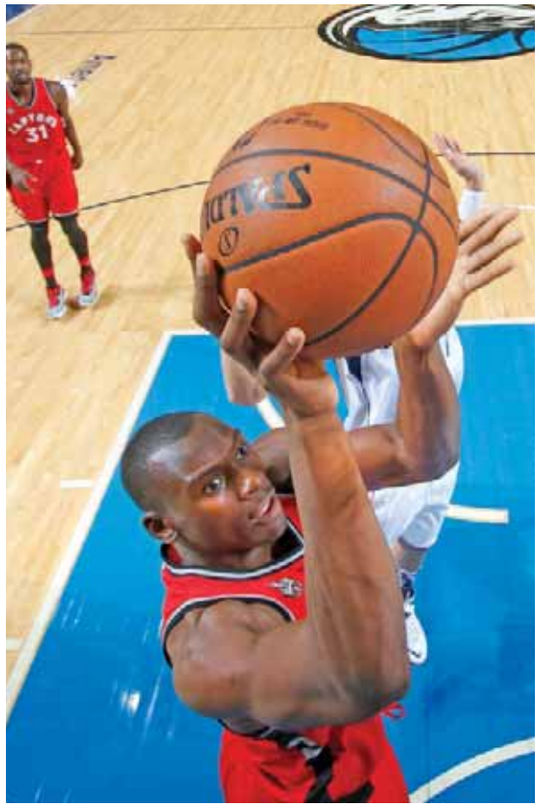
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ellis and George help Pacers rout Mavericks

Monta Ellis scored 13 of his 19 points in the third quarter, Paul George added 19 points and the Indiana Pacers beat the Dallas Mavericks 107-81 on Wednesday.

The Pacers trailed 47-45 at halftime but outscored Dallas 30-17 in the third quarter. Ellis was scoreless in the first half, but the former Maverick scored six straight points early in the third to ignite the Pacers. Indiana led by as many as 26 in the fourth quarter.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Toronto Raptors centre Bismack Biyombo has been working on his catches and free throws. GLENN JAMES/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Biyombo combo is hard work, talent

RAPTORS

Casey satisfied with centre's progress ahead of Hornets test

It has become Dwane Casey's mantra, his dead-on description of the Raptors this season.

"Work in progress," he says so often he finds himself apologizing sometimes for its overuse.

And while Casey always uses it to describe the whole, it can be applied to individuals as well, particularly young centre Bismack Biyombo, an intriguing young talent who returns to play Thursday with Toronto for the first time since leaving the Charlotte Hornets as a free agent in July.

For whatever experience Biyombo gained in four seasons in Charlotte, it barely prepared him for the demands the Raptors are now placing on him. It is one thing to start for a team just starting its ascent as Charlotte was in his first three seasons, it's quite another to be a starter on a team that fancies itself among the top clubs in the conference.

"He's been really working on his catches, rapid fire where he has to catch it," Casey told reporters this week about the 23-year-old's progress.

> **It's going to help us a lot with him rolling to the bucket. They have to pay attention to him.**
> Dwane Casey on Biyombo

"It's going to help us a lot with him rolling to the bucket. They have to pay attention to him. He's been working on his free throws."

That's the kind of in-season improvement Casey wants from each of his players so that they are at peak efficiency when the playoffs roll around.

Biyombo, who was excused from practice Wednesday to take care of some personal matters, is decidedly unsentimental about facing the team that got him after Sacramento took him seventh overall in the 2001 draft and moved him east. He may have appeared in 284 games for Charlotte, but he doesn't see Thursday's game as anything special.

"I look forward to (the game in Charlotte) just as much — I mean as bad as I wanted to win this game (in Indianapolis on Monday) is as bad as I will want to win that game," he told reporters after Toronto lost to the Pacers on Monday.

The loss to Indiana, which ended a four-game winning streak, was a difficult thing for the Raptors to swallow but the way they gave it up was particularly galling. They were up 21 points in the opening quarter but gave in when the Pacers made a run at them, and the game wasn't close the entire second half.

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RECIPE French Onion Soup

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

You won't believe you made your favourite pub food and, better yet, you decide how high to croutons get piled.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 2 onions , thinly sliced
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp flour
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups beef stock
- Half a stick of baguette
- 1 cup grated Gruyère and Parmesan mixed

Directions
1. In a Dutch oven, melt butter and toss onion slices, garlic, sugar, thyme and pinch of salt and pepper. Cook over medium low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring frequently, until onions soften.
2. Sprinkle the flour over the onion mixture and stir. Add the vinegar and a cup of stock. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pot to deglaze. Add the rest of the stock and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Turn your oven onto broil. Cut bread into 1-inch thick slices. Cut as many slices as bowls of soup you'll be serving. Lay them on a cookie sheet and now put a layer of the cheese mix on each piece. Broil in the oven until cheese melts and bread is golden brown.
4. Remove bread from oven and cut into pieces. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with a slice of bread's worth of croutons.

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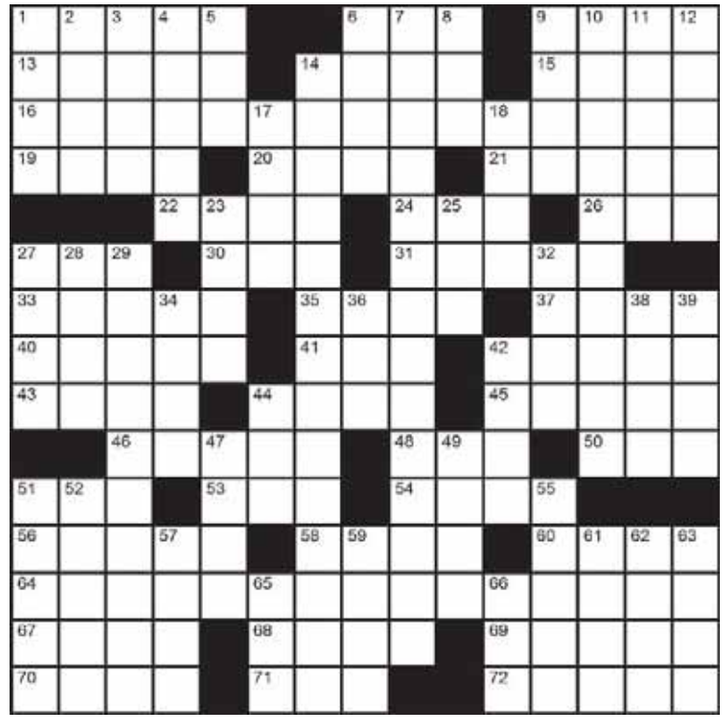
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Kate _ (Designer brand)
6. In past times
9. '_' _ Edmonton
13. 'Ripley's Believe It _ _!'
14. Ocean colour, en francais
15. Thomas Augustine _: "Rule, Britannia" composer
16. Louisbourg... Does this in the 18th century on Cape Breton Island: 3 wds.
19. Buy and _, as stock
20. Jam in
21. Disconcerted
22. Concrete chunk
24. Use up
26. Tiny tallnesses
27. "20/20" network
30. _ _ hurry (Rushed)
31. Folklore fellow Tom
33. Writer's ache
35. Uncommon, to Caesar
37. Blunders
40. 6:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
41. Jackie O's hubby
42. Blood, _ & Tears
43. Greek portico
44. International oil gr.
45. As per #14-Down... "Peyton _" (Primetime soap of the 1960s)
46. Extreme
48. Prior
50. Nature's morning coat
51. Ship-shaped tableware ornament
53. Poetic preposition
54. Towel holders
56. "Over the Rainbow" co-composer Harold
58. Make a scarf
60. Nile wader
64. Newfoundland pudding Figgy Duff or Quebec meat pie Tourtiere, for example: 2 wds.
67. Forum outfit
68. Take _ the waist, as alterations: 2 wds.
69. "Home _" (1990)
70. Original space matter
71. Grey hue
72. Outdoes

DOWN
1. Cries
2. Sister on "Charmed"
3. Indigo
4. As per #14-Down... "Valley of the _" (1967)
5. Plane's take-off info
6. _ Romeo (Sports car)
7. Pom-pommed winterwear item in the Hudson's Bay Company Collection, Wool _ _ Tuque
8. Their-not
9. Wild West's Wyatt
10. Its aroma draws customers into the bakery each day: 2 wds.
11. Beginning
12. Breaks
14. Vancouver-born actress who starred on the show at #45-Across and in the movie at #4-Down: 2 wds.
17. Skim
18. Ballet skirt
23. Gloss-placing spots
25. "Gotcha!"
27. Pretends
28. England denizen, e.g.
29. Soldier's disguise
32. Kitten's whimper
34. Recipe result
36. 'Hect' ending
38. Sprint
39. Brood
42. Accelerated
44. Portland's state, briefly
47. Ms. Collette
49. Oscar-winning composer Nino
51. Dapper
52. Mr. Flynn
55. Sashay
57. Cheese type
59. Old Testament sailor
61. Life stories, briefly
62. Fails to be
63. Tal Bachman's "_ So High"
65. Ms. Carrere
66. Sci. spot

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
In your rush to get ahead of the game you may take on too much. You sometimes have the strength to do two or even three jobs at once but if you do too much now you may regret it later on. Slow down.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
If you stick your nose in other people's business you may regret it. Think how you would feel if others were to involve themselves in your private affairs without being invited.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Is family more important than work? That's the question you need to answer today. Eventually you'll find a stable balance between your home life and your more worldly ambitions.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Keep opinions to yourself. There's no point trying to persuade others to see things your way — they can't, it is beyond them. Go your own way. You don't need public support.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Keep your options open and listen to advice from people with expertise. You may not like to admit that others know best but in some areas they do and you should be big enough to acknowledge that fact.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You'll wish you were some place else today. But no matter how difficult the situation you have to face you'll conquer it before the day is over. You're tougher than you realize Virgo!

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If your energy takes a nose-dive then stop what you're doing and take a break. Each hour you push yourself beyond your limits will take at least a day to recover. Be kind to yourself.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You can't seem to shake off the feeling that something bad is going to happen. Most likely it's all in your head but steer clear of situations you can't fully control. Just in case.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Material and professional success is not the most important thing in your life. What matters most now is that you take the opportunity to improve your domestic situation. Work can wait but loved ones cannot.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You may find it hard to get started today but once you do you'll amaze everyone by how quickly you get through your workload. Start early and the evening should be free for more enjoyable activities.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Resist the urge to point out other people's faults and failings. And don't cut corners or do anything underhand — or it could be your faults and failings that are made public.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
It's likely you will clash with someone in a position of authority. Stand your ground and refuse to be intimidated but also be ready to meet them halfway if they suggest a compromise.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

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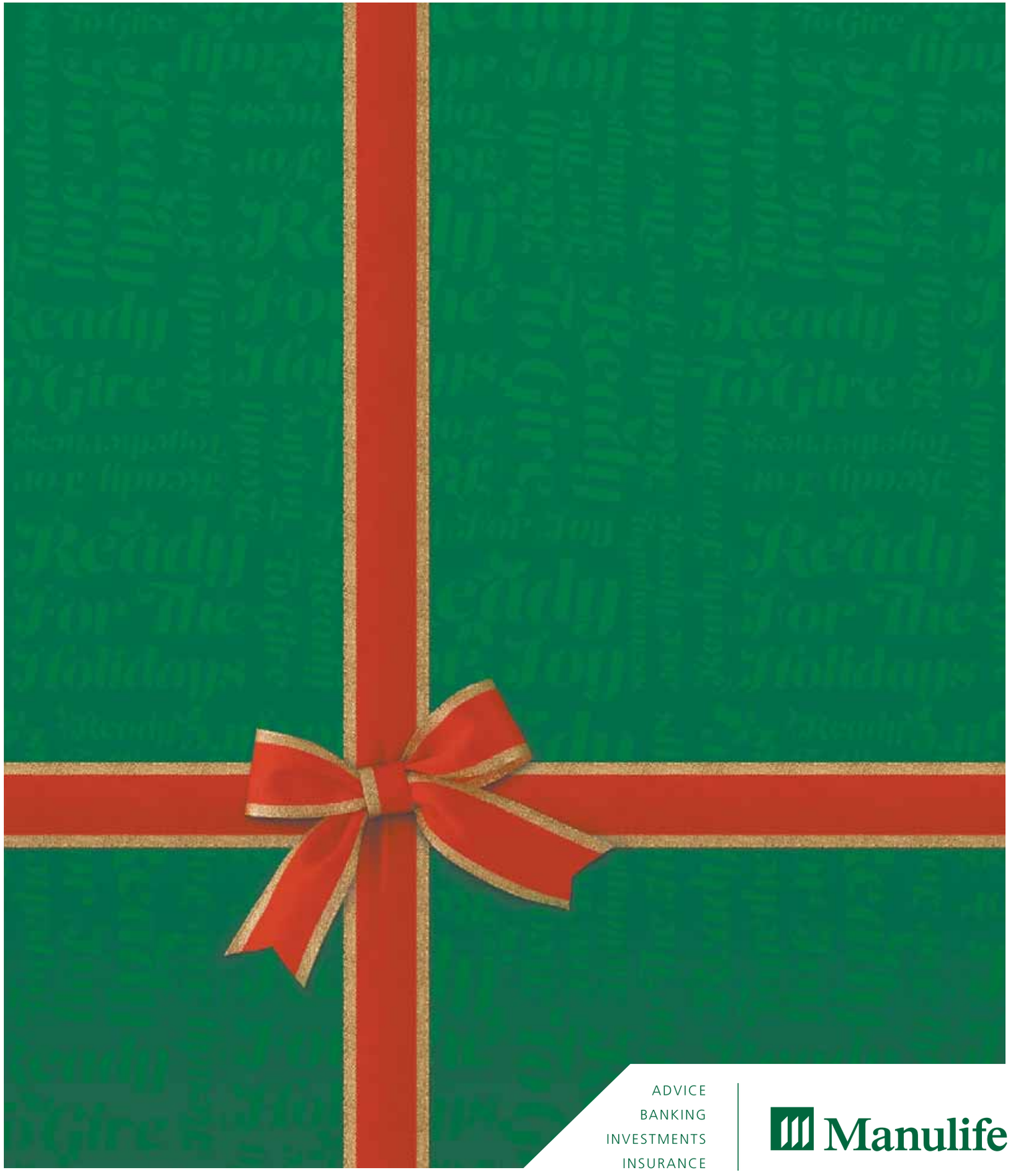

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